

THE LONDON READER

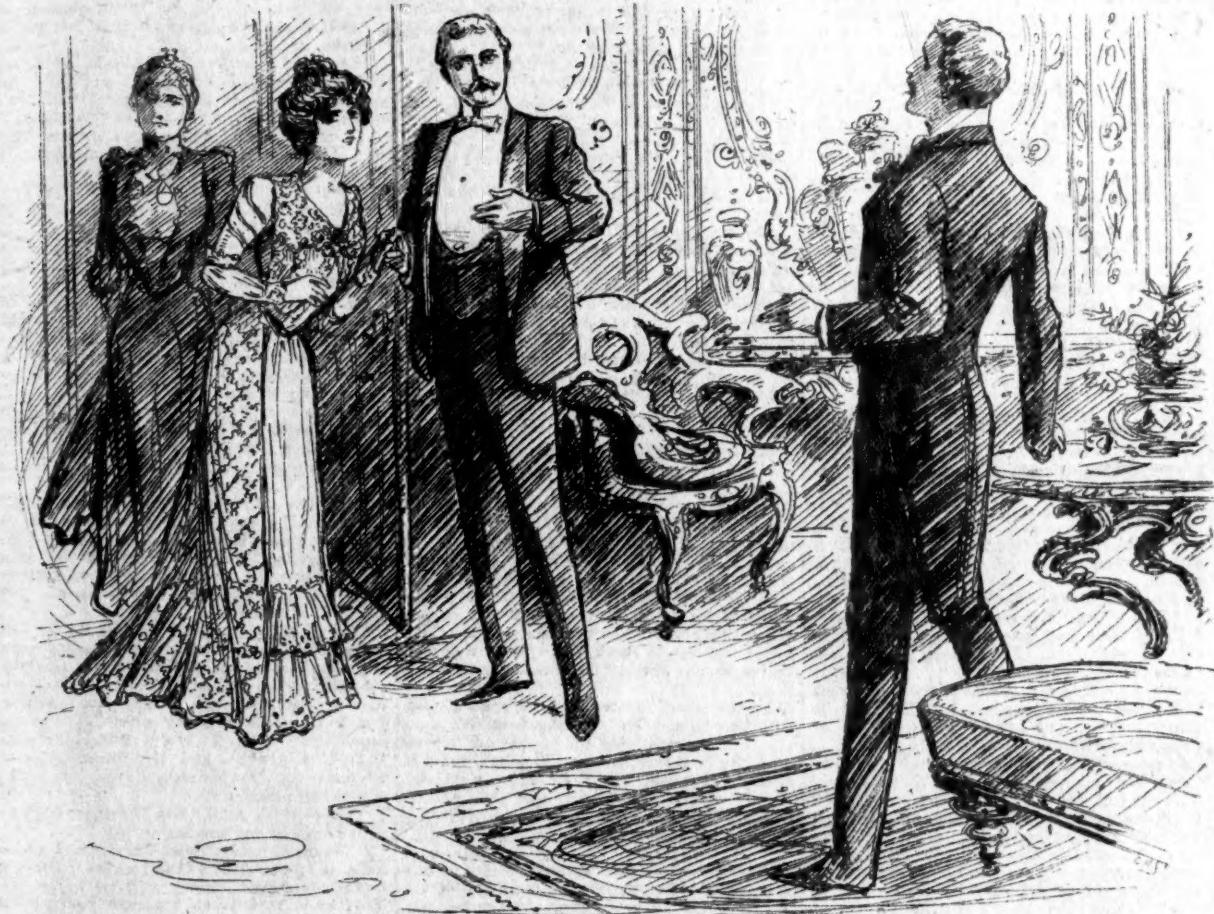
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"I THINK YOU KNOW MY DAUGHTER!" HE SAID, QUIETLY.

MR. TEMPLETON'S DAUGHTER.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD,

"A TRULY great man," said Miss Chandos, laying down the newspaper and looking across the daintily arranged breakfast table at her sister opposite, "a man of whom England may be justly proud. Bless me, Dorothea, I don't believe you have heard a word of what I have been saying."

"Yes, indeed I have, Ginevra," the younger sister replied in some confusion, for her thoughts had been wandering most reprehensibly during her sister's remarks about Howard Templeton—perhaps the most celebrated man in the country just at that time. Miss Chandos was a keen

politician, and loved to discuss the doings of the conclave at St. Stephen's, and to express her opinions pretty freely as to how the nation should be guided by the wise men there assembled. She prided herself on being rather a strong-minded woman, only she did not call it by that name; she liked to be thought just a little above the ordinary weaknesses of her sex, and regarded women who wept and gave outward vent to their feelings with supreme contempt. She had little sympathy with her sister's sentiments, and small feminine failings, and scolded her without stint when she screamed at a mouse or shuddered at a spider, as she was wont to do.

Miss Dorothea had lost the thread of her sister's discourse for some time on this bright summer morning, though she strove to look as if she had heard every word of it. She was content to know that the famous member of Parliament was a great man, without caring much about him, and to take her cleverer sister's word for it that the nation at large owed all its prosperity to his talent and wisdom. She was far more interested in

the well-being of their household and the payment of their pupils' quarterly bills, for the Misses Chandos kept a school.

It was a terrible fact; they did not call it a school; it was an "establishment," a sort of refined and superior home, very select, where young ladies of the highest distinction, when the sisters could get them, were persuaded to learn as much as they would of what was ladylike and genteel, and were trained in all the ways of polite society, as the Misses Chandos remembered them; for in truth they were the tiniest bit behind the age, and just a little old-fashioned, refined gentlewomen though they were.

They were of good birth, and really distant connections of the great family whose name they bore, and in their youth had lived in affluence and splendour. It was long ago now, so long that Miss Dorothea, her sister's junior by about four years, had only the faintest glimmer of recollection of a home with troops of servants and all that goes to make life pleasant.

The crash which ended it all, and made them

fatherless and penniless at one blow, had come along before she was old enough to understand what it meant, and why her mother was so sad, and her sister so white-faced and weary-looking. Life to her had always had struggles and trials in it; she knew that she and her sister had been educated at the expense of richer relatives, and that their mother had been established in a small school by the same people. She was too young to understand what the struggle had been to keep their home together, but the gentle mother, all unused to work and anxiety, had sunk under the burden and left them just as they were entering into womanhood. They were brave and resolute, and looked their position in the face; the school was fairly established, and they resolved to carry it on.

All this was a long time ago now; a small legacy from an unexpected source had enabled them to make a fresh start; the small school in Surrey had been given up some years, and they had migrated to the other side of the Tweed, and purchased the goodwill of a select and high-class school, under the very shadow of the Eildon Hills.

Monk's Ford the house was called—no doubt to distinguish it from the stately Abbotsford, which was well in sight from the bottom of the garden which sloped down to the river, where there was really a ford, quite as easy and somewhat shorter than the one where the holy man came to grief at the hands of the mischievous White Lady. Miss Chandos had been wise when the opportunity offered for the purchase of the school.

"We will not attempt too much," she said to her more timid sister; "there are masters and teachers to be had for the paying, and you and I are behind the times in our attainments, Dorothea; we will take our places—I will be the principal and manager, and you—"

She hesitated a moment, and Miss Dorothea, who fancied that her faded-looking water-colours and her bygone fancy work were the perfection of artistic taste, meekly suggested that the teaching of those arts might be her portion.

"Bosh!" was the reply of Miss Chandos. "The girls we shall have at Monk's Ford will be able to teach you. For a hundred a year and extras parents will expect more than washed-out daubs of pictures and hideous bunches of flowers in impossible colours in worsted work. All those things must be put away," she added, as her sister's glance wandered fondly to the walls where specimens of her prowess had hung ever since they had set up school-keeping together. "No one will send a child to a school where such requirements as those are part of the scheme. You need not teach any more than myself, Dorothea. There must be someone to overlook the sewing and mending, and you do that beautifully, and there will be sick children sometimes, and you have a more motherly way with them than I have."

Miss Dorothea winced a little at her sister's straightforward way of putting things, and felt that she was being relegated to a position something akin to that of nurse and sewing maid, but she wisely said nothing, and things righted themselves.

If Miss Chandos asserted herself as principal at Monk's Ford, and as the servants said "let them know who was mistress," she was careful to uphold her sister's position as well as her own, and Miss Dorothea was as much a power in the school as her more important elder sister. Perhaps one secret of their success was their exclusiveness. Always courteous and kind to every one about them, they kept to themselves out of school hours, and their pretty little room looking out on to the rippling river was rarely invaded by anyone from the rest of the house except by special permission and invitation. Here they could talk as they liked—hence the discussion of the morning paper, and the eulogy pronounced by Miss Chandos on the great man of the hour.

Neither of the ladies had ever seen Howard Templeton, or, indeed, any member of Parliament of note; they were as far removed from the busy world as if they had been in an island of the Pacific. It was one of the recommendations of the school that it was so seceded, and

more than one of the older pupils was a daughter who had proved herself unmanageable at home, and had been sent to the out-of-the-way border village to be tamed and trained into something like a well-behaved young lady. The Misses Chandos were thought to be very successful in this kind of education; they were eminently judicious, and Monk's Ford was more a refined home than a strict school.

"A truly great man," Miss Chandos repeated; "a man with whom I should be proud to shake hands."

"Bless me!" ejaculated Miss Dorothea, wondering what was coming to her sister—she rarely indulged in panegyrics about anybody. "What has he been doing now?"

"Ding! What has he not been doing?" Miss Chandos said, and then she launched into praises of the eminent statesman, and from them into reminiscences of what she had heard of his life.

That it was a life with a story in it all England knew—a story with sorrow and wrong for its foundation, but what it was no one was quite sure.

That the people's idol had been foolish, and let a woman wreck his happiness, was universally believed. Some thirteen or fourteen years before the Misses Chandos were discussing him at their breakfast table, he had gone abroad in the interval of public business, and met his fate at some foreign hotel. The clear-headed statesman, the wise legislator, the man who was held up by all England as one of her best and greatest, gave himself and his fame to a woman not worthy to be the meanest servant in his household.

She was beautiful; everyone admitted that. She had the form of a Venus, and the face of an innocent angel, with an illiterate mind and a scheming, crafty brain. No one knew what Howard Templeton endured while his mistaken union lasted. There was a child, a little daughter—the world knew that much, and guessed that the pale grave man was passionately fond of his child. He attended to his public duties as before his marriage, but without the nerve and spirit that had characterised him before, and people shook their heads, and said that once more a woman had been a great man's ruin.

Another vacation came, and he went abroad with his wife and child, to come back this time alone. The woman for whom he had lost so much lay in the cemetery at Florence, and her child with her—at least, Mr. Templeton said so. Asked where the infant was, he replied "Dead!" and his pained accents and quivering lips told how much it cost him to speak of it.

Then he threw himself into politics once more with redoubled zeal, and for ten years now had been the idol of one party and the dread of the other. Perhaps a great secret of his success was the passionless way in which he acted and spoke—it was as if nothing in this world could move him any more.

"Really, Gluevra, you speak as if you knew him and were in love with him," Miss Dorothea said, when her sister had finished her rhapsody, and Miss Chandos looked up severely and rebuked her.

"Don't be coarse," she said, frigidly; "you do put such disgusting constructions on very simple words sometimes."

Miss Chandos professed to have a great contempt for the weakness of people who fell in love; she was commonly reputed to know nothing about it, and never to have had a love-affair in her life. There were certain mementoes locked up in a drawer in her bedroom that could have told a different tale—tokens of a past in her bright girlhood when she had been wooed and won, but had given up her future for the sake of her feeble mother and almost as feeble sister, who both depended on her strength of mind and good sense for helping them along in the world.

Miss Dorothea had had lovers in plenty—curates and teachers, and all sorts of utterly impossible and ineligible creatures, as her sister declared—and had given Miss Chandos a good deal of trouble lest she should do something rash and compromise the dignity of the school. She

had been fairly scared into old-maidism, had Miss Dorothea Chandos.

She apologised very humbly for her indiscreet words, and gave a little sigh; perhaps in memory of her many admirers, all of whom Gluevra had successfully routed. Then she looked out of the window on to the fresh green landscape, and thought her lines had fallen in very pleasant places after all.

A carriage was coming up the drive—a private one; at least, it was not any vehicle with which she was acquainted. The coachman and footman wore neat dark liveries, and the horses were good and well groomed. There was a quiet taste about the whole equipage that she felt was a distinction.

"A private carriage," she said to her sister, and Miss Chandos looked up.

"It must be some mistake," she replied, "no one would come on any business at this unearthly time in the morning; the servants have been sent to fetch some one and have mistaken the house. Is there anyone in it?"

"Yes."

"Gentleman or lady?"

"Gentleman."

"Ah! Mr. Gosforth, I daresay. He is a little early, but I suppose some one has given him a lift."

Mr. Gosforth was the clergyman of the little Episcopal chapel which the young ladies attended in Melrose, and had been laid up from the effects of an accident for some time; he had only just resumed his duties as theological instructor to the young ladies of Monk's Ford.

"I don't think it is Mr. Gosforth," Miss Chandos said, as the carriage stopped and the footman rang a loud peal at the door bell. "No, it isn't," as a gentleman got out and entered the house; "it is a stranger."

"He has chosen a curious time to come," Miss Chandos said. "Many ladies would be quite unprepared to receive anyone at this time in the morning," and she glanced at her trim breakfast gown in the glass with some satisfaction. Slovenly morning habits were not permitted at Monk's Ford.

They heard a firm, manly tread cross the hall as the visitor was shown into the drawing-room, a pleasant room, utterly unlike the generally conceived notion of the drawing-room at a schoolroom. Everything was in good taste, nothing jarred by undue contrast with the old-world aspect of the place. It was a thoroughly comfortable apartment, and the two mistresses of the house delighted in decorating and beautifying it with their own hands.

"I hope it is a pupil," Miss Dorothea said; "we are not full by any means."

"We do fluctuate," Miss Chandos said, with a little sigh, and if fluctuating meant decreasing in the number of pupils, they certainly did. They could have taken five more young ladies and then not have been inconveniently crowded.

"A gentleman, ma'am," said a neatly-attired waiting-maid, entering with a card on a salver. "His compliments, and he is very sorry to disturb you at such an hour, but his time is very precious, and his business is urgent, so he hopes you will excuse it."

"Say I will see him at once," Miss Chandos said, rising and taking the card, and then sitting down again in utter amazement, and with a face of unutterable astonishment, for the card bore the name of her pet hero, the great statesman, "Howard Templeton!"

CHAPTER II.

A DREAM REALISED.

MRS CHANDOS stared at the card and then at the girl who had brought it, and felt very much as if she should faint with the weight of the honour that sunny summer morning was bringing her. That the great statesman, the man who of all others she admired and revered at humble distance should be in her house waiting to see her, and sending a polite message where he might have commanded, and she would have gladly obeyed.

It was almost too much for belief, almost too much to allow her to speak with calmness to the girl who was wondering not a little at the perturbation her mistress so openly displayed. Miss Chandos was usually as impassive as a statue, especially in business matters, and this visit was distinctly a business one, the gentleman had said so.

The girl had but a vague idea of who Howard Templeton might be; politics were not much discussed in the kitchen at Monk's Ford, and one gentleman was pretty much like another as far as she was a judge.

"Say I will be there immediately, Susan," her mistress said, and the girl retired, telling her companions in the kitchen that she verily believed the gentleman was "come a-courtin';" Misses was thus flurried when she saw his name.

"It's to Miss Dorothea, then," said the cook oracularly. "No one would venture to come courting to her!" meaning Miss Chandos.

"Oh, won't there be ructions if it is!" said the housemaid, who had been many years in the service of the sisters, and had a lively recollection of the routing of the last one or two of Miss Dorothea's lovers; "she won't be allowed to have him, no fear!"

Meanwhile Miss Chandos, with no little trepidation, had taken a survey of herself in the glass to make sure that there was not a pin out of place in her dainty morning toilet, which looked as fresh as heart could wish, and set off her comely features to the greatest advantage. She was inclined to a somewhat severe style of dress as became the mistress of a select school like Monk's Ford, and she wore her grey hair banded down upon her forehead in a rather bygone style, but which suited her features admirably.

Miss Dorothea as being younger, and not having given up all her youthful aspirations and imaginings, loved to adorn herself with such florid finery as her sister did not absolutely forbid. She liked loose draperies and pretty ribbons and soft lace, and contrived to make herself a very attractive and presentable middle-aged lady. She was always all "ends" her sister was wont to declare with a little shiver, when she came downstairs, as she did sometimes, more than usually adorned; but it was only Dorothea, and people knew her and it did not matter much. The "ends" and soft draperies would have been out of place on her, but they suited her sister, and they made a capital contrast.

Mr. Templeton looked up with a rather amused smile on his face as the mistress of the house entered the drawing-room into which he had been shown. He had been contemplating a portrait of himself which was a sort of fetish in the heart of his admirer, and which occupied a prominent place amongst the ornaments of the room.

He came forward with easy grace and introduced himself with the air of a man accustomed to homage, and yet in such a fashion as set Miss Chandos at her ease in a moment.

"You are doing me too much honour, my dear madam," he said, with a careless glance towards the table, "but I can hardly congratulate you on the photograph which has come into your hands. I hope I never did look quite like that, though I suppose I must have done so, or the portrait would not exist. You must allow me to send you something better if you really wish to have such a thing."

Miss Chandos told her sister afterwards that she never knew what she replied to this gracious speech. It was so urban, so informal, almost joking as he smiled and looked at the photograph in its velvet frame.

It did not do him justice, it was older and harder looking, there were the same features, the same curling masses of hair, the shaped and coloured eyes; but the portrait had the look of a man who thought deeply and felt keenly—a man worn with work and the responsibility of a great position. The original carried none of these in his face. It was certainly, as he said, a bad likeness, evidently taken at a time when he was fatigued and weighed down in some way.

"I don't feel flattered by it," he said, and a look that made him very like the picture for a

moment, "neither do I think it good. I hope you will not, when we know each other better."

Miss Chandos was in such a flutter of delight at his graciousness and pleasant words that she could hardly believe her senses, and he recalled her scattered wits with a word of business.

"I am intruding unwarrantably at this hour," he said, "but my time is pretty much occupied, which must be my excuse."

Miss Chandos said something, she hardly knew what, about the extreme value of his time to the country at large, and he smiled as if the notion annoyed him.

"The country could get along very well without me," he said; "in this pleasant place it is good to forget politics for a moment. Miss Chandos, will you do me a favour?"

His manner was curiously abrupt, it was often remarked upon, and Miss Chandos listening to him thought how often she had read in the papers of that very quality of his; his admirers went into raptures over it and called it characteristic, and so forth, his enemies and detractors dubbed it brutal and coarse, and all sorts of hard names.

It was neither. It was somewhat rugged and short—the style of a man who had often to dispose of much and varied business in a very small space of time.

"A favour to you!" Miss Chandos almost gasped, "surely I will. What is it, Mr. Templeton?"

"First of all," he said, smiling again with a winning grace, which was almost as marked a characteristic of his as his brusquerie, "burn that horrible libel on me. I am not a handsome man, but I do not like to feel that my unknown friends are made to think me worse than I am. You shall have another portrait to replace this one if you will destroy it, or, better still, give it to me."

"I will give it to you with pleasure," the winched lady said. "I, that is we, my sister and myself, bought it to have some mementoes of the good you have done, Mr. Templeton."

"Ah, spare me," he said, laughing outright now, "spare me. We're public men, you know; let us come to business. I want some help at your hands."

"Anything that I can do, Mr. Templeton, I shall only be too happy to attempt," Miss Chandos said; "you have only to ask and—"

"Wait till I tell you what it is," he replied. "It is something more than taking a pupil for school terms. Will you undertake the charge of my daughter—the whole charge, I mean—for an indefinite time. I cannot tell when it may suit me to have her with me again, perhaps not for some years."

"Your daughter!"

Miss Chandos could not do more than gasp on the words. All that she had heard of the sorrow in Mr. Templeton's life, and the loss of his wife and daughter coming into her mind, "I did not know."

"That I had such an appendage. No, I dare say not, very few people do. There are reasons," he continued, "reasons which I cannot speak of, hardly bear to think of, indeed, that make me reticent on the subject."

The handsome face quivered a little as he spoke, and Miss Chandos listened, full of ready sympathy.

"You have heard something of the story of my life, I dare say!" he said. "It is pretty much public property, and some of the reports which I have read have the merit of coming tolerably near the truth."

"I don't know that I have heard much," the lady said, gently. She had read every word there was to be found on the subject; but every version of the story of the great M.P.'s luckless marriage was to the same effect in one item—that his child as well as his wife was dead. "I understand you had lost your little girl," she said quietly.

"So did everyone else, and for reasons of my own I have allowed the notion to be believed," he said. "She is not dead, my little Clara. Sometimes I think it would have been better for her, poor little child, if she had died then. But that is neither here nor there, the fact of her

existence remains. I want a home for her, will you give her one? There need be no trouble about terms, whatever you think fit."

Miss Chandos hardly knew how to express how very glad she should be to receive the daughter of so distinguished a man as Mr. Templeton.

It was a forerunner of future prosperity. The school would gain prestige and position by the fact of such pupil having entered it.

Something of this she expressed to her visitor; but it was not to be. Mr. Templeton quietly, but firmly, negatived any publicity being given to the fact that his daughter was to be an inmate of Monk's Ford.

"I cannot give you my reasons," he said, seeing the disappointment in the face of Miss Chandos. "They concern both the child and myself. I am anxious that for the present her existence shall be a secret. Hitherto she has been where she has not been known as my child. She is not quite aware of her identity or rather mine even now. I should like as little said to her on the subject as possible. I must know what she is likely to grow up before I make up my mind how to treat her."

"Too much of her mother in her, perhaps," Miss Chandos thought to herself, but aloud she only said that she should be very happy to undertake the charge of Miss Templeton.

"Our terms are one hundred guineas," she said, taking a prospectus out of a letter-rack on the table, inclusive of everything except one or two special studies that we have to procure masters from a distance for. Of course, if your little daughter is to remain with us during the vacations!"

"With you, of course, either here or wherever you go yourselves. I want you to take her as if she were your own. Expense is no particular object. Shall we say double your usual terms, with a suitable allowance for clothing and extras? You see I am asking for a mother for my child as well as a schoolmistress, and no money will pay for the love and care that I am sure she will receive."

Two hundred a year! Miss Chandos felt quite faint with relief at the proposal. She would have undertaken the most refractory and tiresome child that could be sent her for less than her usual fees just now; for Monk's Ford was certainly on the decline, and here was a double fee coming for a child who would be no expense, and might be very little trouble.

"Is it a bargain?" Mr. Templeton asked, seeing that she paused, and fancying that perhaps she was hesitating. "One great reason for my selecting this place is its extreme seclusion, another the high recommendation of many friends."

"Someone has been flattering us," said Miss Chandos, in a flutter.

"I think not. I have heard nothing but good about Monk's Ford and its mistress; but I want you to keep the fact of my little girl's residence with you a secret from him in particular. It will not be for long, but I have special reasons."

"We will do anything you wish." Miss Chandos replied eagerly; and Mr. Templeton rose.

"Can I bring her to-day?" he asked. "It is imperative that she should leave her present quarters at once. I have reason to be much dissatisfied with her present school."

"Whomver you like," the lady said. "We can take her at once."

"I will bring her in a few hours, then," Mr. Templeton said, rising. "And when I have delivered her into your hands you will give me this libel on my face, will you not? You shall have a really good one in exchange for it."

"You shall have it on one condition," Miss Chandos said, waxing bold in her extreme delight and happiness.

"And that is!"

"Taste you favour me with your autograph, inscribe your name on it, and that will make it inexpressibly valuable to me."

Mr. Templeton laughed, and said his mind was relieved; he did not know what she might be going to ask. She should have the photograph and the autograph as soon as he reached London.

And then he bowed himself out, and was driven

away; and Miss Chandos went back to her sister, hardly able to believe that it was not all a wild dream.

"Two hundred a year, Dorothea, and the nicest man you ever saw!" she said, somewhat incoherently; "and an allowance for clothing besides. It will just put us back where we were before last year."

"Last year" had been a very unlucky year with the two ladies. They had lost some very profitable pupils, and had not found others to supply their places.

"It will do the school a great deal of good," Miss Dorothea opined; and was disappointed and curious when her sister told her that the fact of Miss Templeton's residence in their house was to be kept a secret.

"That is partly the reason he offers us such high terms," she said. "But I am sure, he will not allow us to be losers by it. He will make it up to us in some way besides this money, I am sure."

Miss Dorothea did not say anything, but she thought her wise elder sister had gone slightly mad on the subject of Mr. Templeton.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW PUPIL.

No one had ever seen Miss Chandos in such a state of agitation and flutter as she appeared during the day of Mr. Templeton's visit.

Her lips were sealed about the pupil she expected by her promise to the young lady's father, or she would have carried the story of her triumph to the Mause at the foot of the hill where she was a welcome and honoured guest. Episcopalian though she was, and to her friend Mr. Gosforth, who did not put in an appearance that day at all at Monk's Ford, and to everybody with whom she was on visiting terms.

It was somewhat hard to be entranced with the education of the daughter of the very greatest man in the kingdom, in her eyes, and not be able to speak of it.

She had no idea what the girl would be like. She could guess her age approximately.

The story of the popular member's unhappy marriage was public property, and Miss Chandos had it all by heart.

Miss Templeton would be about twelve years of age—just an interesting age, she told herself, as she gave orders about the bedroom that was to be got ready, and ordered out fine linen and daintier adornments than usually fell to the lot of her pupils.

"A very interesting age, Dorothea," she said to her sister. "Just the period of a child's life when the ideas can be best formed, and the future for good or evil most distinctly marked out. It will be a delightful task, especially when we think whose child she is. We shall love her for her father's sake."

Miss Dorothea smiled, and said nothing; she assented meekly as she always did to what her sister said, but she remembered only the very day before how Geneva had held forth against a young lady just the age of this new pupil, and asserted that twelve years old was the most provoking and tiresome age that ever girls arrived at; that a girl of twelve had no brains, and seemed to have no sense of honour or honesty either; that she was sly and untidy and lazy, and a whole catalogue of evil qualities.

"Geneva isn't always quite just," she said to herself. "Poor little Parsons is not half as bad as she makes her out; but, then, she isn't a member of Parliament's daughter. Dear me, if I had made such a speech as she did just now about loving her for her father's sake, I wonder what she would have said to me! I should have had a lecture an hour long about coarseness and all sorts of dreadful things. Well, well, younger sisters can't do and say what their elders can, that's certain."

She was just as curious, if less demonstrative than her sister, and awaited the arrival of Mr. Templeton's daughter with much interest.

Miss Chandos decided that she was to be treated as a parlour boarder, though the great

man had expressed no wishes on the subject. She felt that the child of so distinguished a man should not mix with the rest of her pupils, aristocratic though they were.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the handsome equipage drove up to door again, this time to be critically examined by all the inmates of the house who could find sufficient excuse for getting to the front windows.

News that someone out of the common was expected had leaked out, and the young ladies were all on the qui vive as well as their elders.

Miss Chandos received her guest at the door as became his distinction. She generally had new arrivals brought to her in the drawing-room, and was apt to impress parents rather forcibly with her extreme dignity.

She abased herself, so to speak, before Mr. Templeton, and welcomed him with effusion. He was every whit as urbane and polite as he had been in the morning.

"I have been rather a long time," he said, as the door closed upon them; "but I had business, and there were one or two things to be attended to. The child's outfit had not come down from town. I have had no one to help me in this matter, my dear madam, so I shall have to trouble you to see that everything is provided that is necessary."

Miss Chandos wondered a little—it was strange that a man like Mr. Templeton should have no female friend to assist him in looking after his child—but he had admitted that there was a mystery, and she said to herself that it would clear up some time.

"This is your pupil," he said, indicating the little girl, who had not spoken nor moved since she was led into the room by Miss Chandos.

"Clare, my dear, give Miss Chandos your hand."

The little girl thus bidden looked the lady

straight in the face with a curious unchildlike

look, as if she were reading her like a book, and held out her hand.

"How do you do!" she said, in a singularly

unchildlike voice.

Miss Chandos drew her closer and kissed her, with an odd feeling that she did not like her much. She was hardly a pretty girl, but there was great power in the face and sufficient good looks to shadow forth beauty by-and-by. It was curious, but she was far more like the portrait that Mr. Templeton had condemned as a caricature than like her father himself; there was the hardness and power in her childish features that were utterly wanting in his. Seated there in the pretty drawing-room at Monk's Ford, he looked a handsome *désavoué* man of the world—not a bit of the grave statesman about him—and yet the portrait was good as a likeness too.

"You promised to give me this," Mr. Templeton said, seeing her glance from the child to the photograph.

"Yes, on conditions," she replied.

"They shall be faithfully fulfilled," he said, smiling. "Let me see, I am to send you the very best portrait that has ever been taken of me, with my autograph attached, is not that it?"

"Yes," Miss Chandos said, delighted; "I shall prize it—ah! I cannot tell you how I shall prize it, Mr. Templeton. Do you know it has been one of the dreams of my life to see you, to shake you by the hand, and now—"

"Like all dreams, the reality turns out a poor sham; is it not so, Miss Chandos?"

"No, indeed, it is an honour I shall never forget—one which I could never have hoped for; ladies are not supposed to be politicians, Mr. Templeton, and I daresay I am very ignorant, but no one can help being interested in the good you are doing daily."

Her speech was brought to an abrupt conclusion by the very curious expression that flitted over the face of the child, who was listening silently to what was going on. To Miss Chandos it looked like intense scorn; she certainly had no reverence for her father and his greatness; probably she knew nothing about it.

"Clare is hardly of your opinion, you see," he said. "Politics have very little meaning for her; she has never seen her father made the idol of the hour."

"She will understand and appreciate it some day," Miss Chandos said, stroking the little hand she held, which, to her surprise, was promptly drawn away; Miss Templeton was evidently not used to caresses.

"There is nothing more, I think!" Mr. Templeton presently said, "except to take your gift, Miss Chandos (I don't think I shall destroy it, but keep it as a memento of your pleasant house and courteous kindness), and to arrange with you for the first year of my little girl's stay with you—two hundred pounds. Will you have a cheque or notes? I brought both with me."

"I—I will have a cheque, if you please," Miss Chandos said, all in a flutter of delight and excitement.

As a rule she hated cheques, after the fashion of her sex, but the idea of taking a cheque to the bank with such a name on it as that of Howard Templeton put all her antipathy to flight.

"Certainly," said Mr. Templeton pulling out his pocket-book, but pausing with it in his hand. "I don't know," he said, "I think it would hardly be safe."

"Safe!" she echoed in surprise. "Anything from you would surely be safe."

"Quite," he said, "that was not my meaning. For you to cash a cheque of mine might draw attention to the fact I wish to conceal, of Clare's residence in your house. I do not say it would, but it might, and it would bring about complications which I cannot explain now, but which you shall thoroughly understand before long. I think I had better give you the sum in notes."

"At you please, perhaps it would be better," Miss Chandos said, and he laid a bundle of notes on the table before her and proceeded to count them. It almost took her breath away to see the unconscious manner in which he let them flutter through his fingers, notes new and old, such a bundle of them.

Money was not too plentiful at Monk's Ford, and a bank note did not stay long in the possession of the Misses Chandos.

"I think that is right for the main business," Mr. Templeton said, handing quite a parcel of notes to Miss Chandos. "I have got them in small amounts on purpose; there is nothing higher than a twenty there; ladies sometimes find it difficult to change paper money."

"You are very considerate," Miss Chandos replied, counting the notes with trembling fingers. "It is difficult sometimes. They are quite right, thank you, Mr. Templeton."

"Yes, for the year's board and so forth, but Clare will want pocket-money, and more clothes, doubtless. You see my movements will be rather uncertain soon."

"Ah, yes! England is going to lose you; you are going abroad, I saw something about it in the paper."

"I think the papers know more of my business than I do myself," the great man said with a little curl of his handsome lip. "They are right this time, I am going abroad, as you say. I may not communicate with you for some time, therefore I had better give you a little more for whatever extras there may be. Say fifty pounds, will that do?"

"Oh, it is more than enough," Miss Chandos said, "but you will leave an address to be written to, if your little girl should be ill; we cannot always foresee."

"Clare is very healthy," Mr. Templeton replied. "I don't think she has ever been ill in her life, I will come and see her before very long; as for my address you know where a letter will always reach me."

He spoke as a man who is known all over the world, and Miss Chandos said no more; and again the queer expression, so like contempt, came over the child's face.

"I must go," Mr. Templeton said. "I have wasted too much time in this lovely district already. I leave my child with you in perfect confidence, Miss Chandos."

"I will do by her as if she were my own," was the warm reply, and she held out her hand, which was warmly shaken.

"Good-bye, Clare," Mr. Templeton said, hold-

ing out his hand to the child, who gave hers in return. She did not spring to her father's arms, or attempt to kiss him, only looked at him quietly and said,—

"Good-bye, papa," in a quiet voice, with no emotion in it whatever.

There was not a quiver in the dark little face, not a wistful look in the large, expressive eyes, and before Miss Chandon had recovered from her amazement at her new pupil's demeanour, Mr. Templeton had bowed himself out of the room and was getting into his carriage at the door. He waved a good-bye to her and was gone, leaving her feeling very much as if the whole affair was some queer dream. There were the notes and the little girl to convince her to the contrary, and she led the child to her own sitting-room to introduce her to her sister.

Looked at without her hat, Clare Templeton was decidedly better-looking; she had beautiful hair and eyes, and by no means irregular features, and her dark skin was clear, if brown; she would make a strangely attractive woman by-and-by. That odd look, so like the portrait, of which her father had taken possession, puzzled Miss Chandon; it was exactly where the picture did not resemble the original. She was curiously self-possessed for one so young; she did not appear to be more than twelve years old.

Miss Chandon asked her age, and she replied,—

"Papa says that I am twelve and a-half. Introduce me to this lady, please, I have not seen her before."

There was so much of a grown-up woman in her, that Miss Chandon amazed out of all her notions of dignity, presented her sister as if the new pupil had been Mr. Templeton's wife instead of his daughter.

"Thank you," replied the child, gravely, "I am glad to know you, Miss Dorothea, I think we shall be friends."

"And don't you think we shall be friends, too, my dear?" asked the elder sister, astonished; she felt as if she had got a fairy changeling into her house instead of a child; there was such a curious air about the little creature, for Miss Templeton was *petite*—very small indeed for her age.

"I hope we shall," was the quiet reply. "But you are the mistress, you see."

"And your experiences of school mistresses have not been quite pleasant, is that it?"

"That is it," the new scholar replied. "I have been at one school before, and I should have run away in another week. There are things a person cannot bear."

"Oh, dear, I hope she won't try to run away from here," Miss Chandon thought to herself, beginning to understand why Mr. Templeton wanted a retired sort of school for his daughter. "I am afraid we shall have trouble with her."

"I should like my boxes taken up, please," said the child after a pause. "My things were got together rather in a hurry, and there may be a good many wanting."

And Miss Chandon was so taken aback by her coolness and self-possession that she rang the bell and gave the necessary orders without a word.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS CHANDOS IS PERPLEXED.

THERE was something curiously repellent in the manner of this odd child. Miss Chandon seemed as if she could not find words to talk to her, and she allowed her to go to her room and look after her belongings, feeling very much as if she had dreamed all that had passed, and should wake to find that Howard Templeton's visit and the charge he had placed in her hands were all a myth.

Miss Templeton looked on while her trunks were uncerdied, after a furlike glance round the pretty room that had been arranged for her. It was impossible to tell from the look whether she approved of her quarters or not. She turned back to her boxes without a word of comment.

"I hardly know how the things are put in," she said. "They are not arranged in any way.

They are all new, and we had to take a great deal for granted, as we were in a hurry."

"We!" echoed Miss Chandon, bewildered.

"Yes, papa and I. Nothing that I had before would do, of course. He gave away all my old things that I had at—at the last school. He said I must be properly fitted to come here."

"And where was your last school, dear?" the governess asked, hoping to gather something about her odd new pupil from the reply.

"Abroad," was the curt reply. "Papa told me not to speak of it if I could help it; it was a mistake to send me there."

Her lips closed with a sort of snap, as if she declined to say any more, and Miss Chandon was too much taken aback to question her.

"I think you had better look over the other things," the child said, after the trunks had been emptied, and the bed and chairs were filled with handsome looking clothes. "I am almost sure there is something wanting, but I hardly know what."

A good deal was wanting. Miss Chandon called her sister, and they went over the newcomer's wardrobe together. Miss Dorothea turned her over to the teacher in charge of the schoolroom with a certain amount of dread as to what might happen next.

"I don't believe she's a child at all," she said to herself, as she closed the door on the expectant group of girls. "She's more like a fairy changeling or a child-witch. I am afraid she will upset the schoolroom sadly."

She was agreeably disappointed to find that

such was not the case; the new girl elected to behave most amiably to her schoolfellows and politely to the teachers, and the evening passed pleasantly enough.

Miss Templeton managed to let everybody know that she considered herself a person of importance, and she showed herself an adept in the art of finding out all that she wanted to know about other people without telling an atom more than she wanted to about herself.

Before bedtime she had managed to extract all sorts of information from almost all the girls, getting at their names and their histories in a curiously sharp fashion, but when they separated for the night the rest of them found that they knew nothing more about the new comer than that her name was Clare Templeton, and that she had been at school on the Continent before her arrival at Monk's Ford.

She had not given a hint as to whereabouts the school had been, not the slightest bit of information about her father, of whom the girls were burning to hear something. She parried all questions with wonderful skill, finally stopping their queries with a scornful remark to the effect that she did not know where they could all have come from if they regarded a member of Parliament as such a wonderful person.

The two heads of the establishment discussed her over their quiet supper, when the girls were all safe in bed, and the teachers enjoying their usual nightly liberty in their own part of the house.

"I shall never like her, never," Miss Chandon said, pitifully. "She is the most disagreeable child I have ever received here; she will worry us to death, Dorothea!"

"Not quite so bad as that, I hope," Miss Dorothea said, gently. "She is strange to us as yet, she will improve in time."

"I am sure I hope she may," Miss Chandon replied, "there is room for it."

Things were not so bad as the good lady anticipated. Clare Templeton chose to make herself agreeable, and to learn her lessons with proper attention and zeal. She was very badly grounded in all elementary knowledge, and it seemed sometimes as if she had never been regularly taught.

In vain her teachers tried to find out where her education, such as it was, had been begun; they came to think that she had been forbidden to tell, and ceased asking her about it. There was a mystery about her; Mr. Templeton had said as much when he brought her to school, and it should be respected.

Miss Chandon did feel a little disappointed when the newspapers announced Mr. Templeton's departure for the Continent and she had not received the promised photograph; she had been so looking forward to its arrival with the great man's autograph, and perhaps a letter as well.

She dropped a word or two about it only a few days after the arrival of the little girl at Monk's Ford in her presence, and she had curled her lip with the peculiar expression that was common to

room, and be introduced to your school-fellows."

"I don't want to know any of them particularly. Am I to be in the schoolroom? Papa did not say so."

"Some part of the day, of course," Miss Chandon said, somewhat sharply. "It will be necessary; you will soon learn to like them all, I hope."

"It will not signify much; I shall see as little of them as possible; I shall not want them, and they will not care for me."

"Oh yes, dear, they will. You will find them very lovable, sociable girls."

"Nobody likes me," was the only reply the child made to this remark, and Miss Chandon turned her over to the teacher in charge of the schoolroom with a certain amount of dread as to what might happen next.

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her, and remarked that her papa had to promise a great many things to all sorts of people, and it was not wonderful if some of them were overlooked.

"I hope he does not class me with all sorts of people, my dear," the lady replied, a little nettled at the speech.

"Oh, I didn't mean that, of course," Clare replied, "but you know, in his position—"

"Of course, dear," Miss Chandon said, wondering what the curious smile on the young face meant; "he is always engaged, I know; still I hope he will not forget Monk's Ford, and his little girl."

"I am not afraid of being forgotten," Miss Templeton answered, and said no more on the subject.

"It looks as if he had forgotten me at any rate," Miss Chandon said to her sister when a week had gone by after Mr. Templeton's departure. "I wish I had not let him take that portrait, it was strangely like Clare."

"I hope he will be satisfied with Clare when he sees her," Miss Dorothea said, thoughtfully. "To my mind she is improved; she is more gentle and not so very abrupt and brusque as she used to be."

"She is not a lovable child," Miss Chandon remarked, with a little sigh. "There is always something about her that I cannot understand. She seems to have things on her mind, she is unchildlike. I should have liked a little more knowledge of her antecedents, but Mr. Templeton had evidently made up his mind to keep them to himself, and I believe the child has been tutored."

"No doubt she has. We shall be told all about her in good time," Miss Dorothea said. "No doubt Mr. Templeton's reasons are good."

"They are tantalising at any rate. Are you inclined for a walk this afternoon?"

"Yes. Where do you want me to go?"

"To Macdonald's and I think to Brown's also. They had better have some money each of them."

Miss Chandon was quite easy on the subject of money now. Clare Templeton had certainly brought her good luck, for her house was full of paying pupils, and a good deal of the two hundred pounds still remained untouched.

Some of it had been paid away, Mr. Gosforth, the clergyman, had been the first recipient of a note for ten pounds, and had listened with admiring wonder to the story of the great man's visit, and the introduction of his child to the school.

He was much interested in Clare, and saw a more lovable nature than appeared on the surface, and the child in her turn seemed to like him very much.

The two tradesmen whom Miss Chandon had named had also received some of Mr. Templeton's money, and in due time would have more; one was the grocer, the other the butcher, who served the Misses Chandon, and as there was no stint of food in their house, and the young ladies had the usual appetites of healthy school girls, their custom was not to be despised.

Miss Dorothea returned from her expedition into the town rather serious, and with a puzzled look on her pleasant face.

"Well," Miss Chandon said, looking up from her work as her sister entered, "have you attended to everything?"

"Yes, I think so; Catarat is writing to London to-night, and will match those things for you; but I didn't pay the money you gave me at either of the other places."

"Not pay it—why?"

"Neither of them would take it."

Miss Chandon stared at her sister as if she thought she had taken leave of her senses.

"Not take it!" she repeated in amazement.

"No."

"Why not?"

"They neither of them said; they are going to call on you; Brown said the money was of no consequence. I thought Macdonald's manner rather rude. He did not say much, but he declined the note; he said he should prefer its standing over for a little while."

"I never heard of such a thing, never," Miss Chandon said. "Tradesmen are generally so

eager for their money. However, it does not signify; it is there for them when they want it. Who is that, I wonder?"

"Mr. Gosforth," Miss Dorothea replied. "What can he want, I wonder?"

It was a little surprising, for Mr. Gosforth had not long left the school; his usual lesson having taken place that afternoon.

"Just in time for a late tea," Miss Chandon said, greeting him warmly as he entered. "Dorothea has been to Melrose for me, and is only just come in. Sit down and tell us the news, if there is any."

Mr. Gosforth sat down, but he looked very uncomfortable, and seemed to have hardly a word to say.

"I have come about something very uncomfortable," he blurted out at length. "I am very sorry."

"Something uncomfortable!" Miss Chandon said. "What is it?"

"I hardly know—that ten pound note you gave me—"

"Yes; what of it?"

"There is something not quite right about it. I am afraid it is a forgery."

"A forgery!"

Miss Dorothea turned very white as she gasped out the word; its very utterance appeared to her fraught with some unknown danger.

"Yes; I have received a letter from the bank about it. You will know where you had it from, of course."

"Certainly we do," Miss Chandon said, recovering her scattered wits a little. "It was one of those I received from Mr. Templeton."

"Ah, then you had better communicate with him at once," Mr. Gosforth said, much relieved in his mind. "You will be no loser by it."

CHAPTER V.

MISS CHANDON IS ENLIGHTENED.

It was very unpleasant, of course; but equally of course there was some mistake, and a line to Mr. Templeton would put everything right. Miss Chandon sat down to write it, asking Mr. Gosforth to stay and see that she worded her letter properly. It was such an awful thing to have to write to a Member of Parliament about a forged bank note.

In her secret heart the good lady believed that Mr. Gosforth, and the bank, and everybody who had anything to do with it were wrong. She felt inclined to take the note back and exchange it for another. She had no others except the remainder of Mr. Templeton's payment; and it was not a very great remainder now. She had paid so much money away in getting rid of old debts.

"Will that do?" she asked, when she had finished a very apologetic and terrified little note, and handed it to the clergyman to read. "It is dreadful to have to hint at such a thing to him."

"You needn't have abused yourself quite so much," he said with a smile. "He is only a mortal like ourselves, and a very unpretending one, if all stories of him are true."

"Oh, that he is!" Miss Chandon said eagerly. "A perfect gentleman, not an atom of pride. What will he do? Will he send another note do you think, or a cheque, or perhaps come over. Ah! if he would only do that."

"I don't think Mr. Templeton will be so concerned over a matter of ten pounds as to break in upon his holiday and come home. He will order his secretary to see into the affair, and there will be an end of it. We shall not lose the money, be sure of that."

"I am sure of it," Miss Chandon said, with something of pride in her idol in her tone.

Mr. Gosforth smiled at her enthusiasm, but made no remark. He took her note to the post-office, quite content to wait for his money till the unpleasant little affair should be set right.

Miss Chandon felt very uncomfortable; but it was more on Mr. Templeton's account than her own. It was such a miserable matter for him to be troubled about; but there was more trouble in store for her. Worries seldom come singly,

and that afternoon was to bring her plenty. She was dressing for dinner; it was a ceremony at Monk's Ford which was never omitted—when she was told that she was wanted.

"I cannot see anyone now," she said somewhat sharply to the maid who summoned her, "you know that quite well!"

"Yes'm!" the girl replied. "I told them so, but they just said they would wait till you came down—their business wouldn't keep."

"Who are they?" asked the lady, angrily.

"They must be very insolent people."

"They gave the names of Brown and Macdonald, ma'am," the girl said. She was new to Monk's Ford, and did not yet know all the tradespeople by sight. "They are not exactly gentlemen."

"No," Miss Chandon said with a little laugh, though she felt uncomfortable; she hardly knew why. "They are not gentlemen; go down and say it is inconvenient for me to see them now. I will do so-morrow morning."

The girl went, but returned in a minute or two with a message to the effect that the business of the two men was of a nature that would not wait, and that they must see Miss Chandon at once—they would wait her coming downstairs.

It was a very peremptory summons, and it made Miss Chandon feel rather uncomfortable. There was no reason why she should feel put about at the arrival of two of her tradespeople. They had been to the house before both of them; but she had been upset by the business of the ten pound note, and everything seemed to be going a little wrong.

"Show the persons into the morning-room," she said to the girl, "and say I will be down directly. Let them understand that I can only see them for a minute or two at this hour."

This notification was received with indifference by the visitors, one of whom went so far as to say in the servant's presence that Miss Chandon would have to suit her time to theirs till their business was finished.

They bowed gravely to her as she entered in all the bravery of her dinner attire, for she loved to be well dressed, and some of Mr. Templeton's timely payment had gone to her drapers. The butcher, Mr. Macdonald, was the first to speak.

"Sorry to come at an inconvenient time," he said, shortly, "but this is a matter of business, ma'am. Your sister, Miss Dorothea, called upon us two this morning."

"Yes, to make a further payment, and—"

"And we wouldn't take it. Just so, Miss Chandon, we could not afford to! We are neither of us rich, and she offered notes again. A struggling tradesman can't afford to take notes from you, ma'am."

"I—I don't understand you," faltered the poor lady, though a horrible suspicion was upon her that she did. "I paid the notes as I received them myself, in payment of an account. You have never refused any manner of payment from me before."

"Because they were all straightforward, if they were a little slow," the other man put in. "Tales is a different matter altogether, when a lady takes to issuing forged notes."

"Forged!"

Miss Chandon could only gasp out the word, everything seemed to grow dark before her eyes for a minute, but Mr. Macdonald brought her to herself by another terrible statement.

"Yes, ma'am, forged, and by all accounts you have been scattering them pretty well! We two agreed that we would come over here and give you a word of warning, for it seems to us that it is some fraud that has been practised upon you. We have known you a good time, you see, and we know that you have come through difficulties honourably and—"

"Thank you," said Miss Chandon, with some dignity. "I hardly know what it all means! Will you tell me exactly what it is, please?"

She clasped her hands very tightly in her lap so that she might not betray how scared she was, and set herself to listen. The story was very brief. The principal draper in the town had called upon Mr. Macdonald only the day

before, and shown him a note which he had received from the mistress of Monk's Ford which he had essayed to change and found a forgery. Upon this the butcher and grocer had also made an effort to get cash for the notes received by them on the same day and made a like discovery.

"And now, ma'am, we've come to you to know what it all means," Mr. Brown said, not uncivilly, though he rather misunderstood the deadly whiteness that came over the unfortunate lady's face. "It's an awkward business, you see. Mr. Cataret's in a tangle he is, and talked of going to his lawyer at once, but we said we had better hear something about it first; and there's Miss Ramsay, the dressmaker, she's making fuss enough about her five pounds; it's the same with her, and she's let all the place know about it. She says that she'll go to a writer about it as soon as we go back, and—"

"Please don't say any more for a minute," Miss Chandos said, feebly. She had hard work to keep herself from fainting, but there was no one to help her. She rose and rang the bell, and bade the girl tell Miss Dorothea and the teachers to go on with the dinner. The gentlemen's business was important, and she should be detained some little time.

"I don't know what to say," she said, after a little pause. "I can hardly expect you to believe it. I cannot believe it myself! All the notes paid away by me on the two days that these transactions cover were obtained from the same person in payment of an account. I received a large sum and devoted a large part of it to the payment of bills. I have already written to the gentleman who made the payment to me, and as soon as an answer could reach me I shall hear from him. I must beg that it may stand over till then."

"I don't mind waiting for a post or so," the butcher said, feeling really sorry for the poor lady, who showed no little bravery under the distressing circumstances. "But it will have to be settled somehow, and that soon."

"It shall be settled by the payment of the bills as soon as I can get an answer, but the gentleman is abroad."

"That kind of gentry are very fond of going abroad," the grocer remarked; "you've been swindled, ma'am, and that's about it, for I don't doubt your word for a minute."

Miss Chandos smiled in the midst of her misery and terror.

"Swindled!" she exclaimed, "you do not know the gentleman, or you would not say that. He is as incapable of doing a mean action as a sinless angel can be. He will know how the notes came into his possession, and will make it all straight."

"I hope so, ma'am, for your sake," the butcher remarked, and then they left her to go into her own room and lock the door, and go into hysterics, which she fought out by herself, burying her face in the bedclothes, lest anyone should hear her.

"Poor old girl! It's rough on her," Mr. Brown remarked, as they went away; "she's been awfully swindled, there's a matter of a hundred pounds out in them notes."

Mr. Macdonald did not say much; he was ruminating on something besides his mousey.

"I wonder if we shall ever know who it is," he said, with a little laugh; "I should like to know who Miss Chandos thinks as innocent as a sinless angel!"

Miss Chandos kept the secret of the motive of the visit of the two shopkeepers a secret even from her sister. She told Miss Dorothea that their business was unpleasant, that there was a mistake about the amount of their bills, and it had upset her a little; but she resolved to wait the reply to her note to Mr. Templeton before saying anything about it.

It came in due course, when the sisters were sitting at breakfast, a letter bearing the Vienna postmark. Miss Chandos opened it, stared at it for a moment, and then fell off her chair on to the carpet in a dead faint. Miss Dorothea shrieked and rang the bell wildly, and the servants came rushing in. Miss Chandos was picked up and laid on the sofa, and Miss Dorothea took the letter that had caused the

catastrophe. She did not faint like her sister, but she felt very much as if the world were turning upside down. This is what she read:—

" Hotel Maximilian,
" Ludwigstrasse,
" Vienna, June 16th, 18—.

"MADAM.—I am directed by Mr. Templeton to inform you that there is some mistake; he presumes that you have confounded him with some other person of the same name! He has not been in the neighbourhood of Abbotsford for more than ten years; he has no knowledge of your name or of the school you mention. He has no daughter or any young lady relative at school at all.—I am, madam, your obedient servant,

"CLARENCE POWER."

"Send for Mr. Gosforth," gasped Miss Dorothea; when she had read this terrible epistle; "beg him to come at once. Oh, what does it all mean? What is to be done?"

It was a long time before Miss Chandos could be brought round out of this terrible swoon. When strong-minded and strong-willed women do faint they do it as they do everything—with a will, and as if they meant it, and it was a fainting fit that was almost death. Mr. Gosforth came, and grasped the situation at once.

"You have been egregiously swindled," he said. "Perhaps the child herself knows something. Where is she?"

"What shall we do with her?" Miss Dorothea said, weeping. "I should like to turn her out of the house this minute."

"She may be innocent of any knowledge of harm," the clergyman said gently. "Shall I question her for you?"

"Oh, please do!" the younger sister said. She seemed to be the stronger now; poor Miss Chandos was utterly prostrate.

"Not here; not in this room," the poor lady gasped from the sofa. "I could not bear the sight of her; indeed I could not."

Miss Dorothea and Mr. Gosforth adjourned to the drawing-room and summoned Clare Templeton.

She came into the room very pale and a curious look in her eyes, as if she knew or guessed that some long-expected blow had fallen, and stood before them silent but evidently defiant.

"We want to ask you a question or two," Mr. Gosforth said, gravely.

"Yes!" Miss Dorothea struck in excitedly. "We want to know who and what you are. You are no daughter of Mr. Templeton's, we know that much. You have come here under false pretences. Your father is no member of Parliament; he is a swindler and—"

"Stay a moment," the clergyman said, laying his hand on the arm of the frail lady. "That is going a little too fast. Clare will tell us all she knows about herself, and who her father really is, and we shall know how to act. She is too young to have been a party to all that has evidently been done."

"She is not too young to know," Miss Dorothea said. "She has posed here as the daughter of a rich man; held her own in the school as the child of the most influential man in the kingdom."

"I have not," said the child, indignantly. "I have never said one word about my father; I have never told any of you a syllable about myself: it is you who have done the boasting; there was no need for me to do it."

It was true; she had not. Miss Dorothea recalled how she had tried to get the child to talk of herself, and failed, and how the other girls had often remarked that there was nothing to be got out of her.

"Whatever shall we do with her?" she said. "Genevra will never endure the sight of her again."

A sudden fear seemed suddenly to seize the little girl, and her eyes dilated.

"Take me away! Oh, take me away!" she said, clinging to Mr. Gosforth's arm, and he looked down pityingly at her unturned face.

"I think that will be the best plan," he said.

"Let her come home with me for a day or two; my sister will take care of her."

CHAPTER VI.

IN GREATER DARKNESS.

MR. GOSFORTH took the forlorn child to his home and the kind care of his sister, and it was well for her that he did so, for the next few weeks were fraught with misery and dissipation to the poor ladies at Monk's Ford, all brought about by the advent of the daughter of the great man.

In two days from the visit of the tradesmen Miss Chandos found herself in a set of difficulties out of which she could not extricate herself. Threats, reproofs, and accusations of dishonesty came from all quarters. Some of the unlucky notes had got into the hands of strangers, who knew nothing and cared less about the high moral characters of the sisters, and what was worse than all, the thing was made terribly public. In vain Miss Chandos protested, and offered repayment of all sums representing the forged notes; she was hardly believed, and the character of her school was gone. Pupil after pupil was removed, till, at the end of the autumn term, it became evident to the bewildered and sorrow-stricken ladies that their school had melted away. There would be nothing for it but for them to sell up and get away out of the neighbourhood, and try and begin again somewhere, where they would not be pointed at as the possessors of forged notes.

And in all this time they had found out nothing about the odd child so wickedly thrust upon them, and in the midst of their troubles were more than thankful to Mr. Gosforth and his sister for offering her a home. They found her useful. The clergyman told them he was agreeably disappointed in her, and for the present at least she should remain in his house.

Miss Chandos declared she could not see her. She wished her no harm, but she never wanted to look upon her face again, and she would not allow her sister to say good-bye to the poor little waif. Uncharitable, perhaps, but natural under the circumstances, and Clare was left without so much as a good-bye.

The Misses Chandos were going back to London and Mr. Gosforth intimated that he and his sister would see that the girl was not cast adrift. As a matter of fact, the worthy clergyman, and his sister too, had taken a great fancy to the child—partly from her very forlornness, and partly from the fact that they saw that the two ladies disliked her.

A curious suspicion that all was not quite right had haunted Mr. Gosforth's mind from the first, but he had no grounds for his suspicions, and said nothing about them.

For the first week or two they abstained from any questions. They wanted to see what the little girl really was like. There was a curious reliance and distrust about her that was not wonderful. They would let her learn to love them before they tried to win her confidence. There was no lack of love in her little heart, but she had never been with people who strove to call it out, and she attached herself with clinging fidelity to these kind friends who had sheltered and protected her.

One day, when the troubles at Monk's Ford were at their height, and the sale of the goods of the Misses Chandos was making a public scandal, Miss Gosforth found her weeping violently in a corner of the garret that was used as a lumber room.

"What is the matter, dear?" she asked. "I have been looking for you."

But Clare did not answer; only sobbed out that she was sorry—so sorry, and she wished she was dead.

It was some time before the cause of her grief was quite clear.

Miss Gosforth had a notion that she did not care for the Misses Chandos, and that she was callous about the wrong she had helped to do them.

It was not the case. Her little heart was wrung by the story of their humiliation and disgrace, and she would have done anything to help them if she could.

"Perhaps you may help, by helping them to find out who you are, and who it was that played them such a trick," Miss Gosforth suggested.

Bat Clare shook her head.

"I don't know anything," she said, sadly. "Not a single thing. I have been at school all my life; I have not learned much; but it has always been a school I was at from the very first. I don't think papa cared for me much. I don't think anyone ever cared for me."

"Someone cares for you now," Miss Gosforth said, drawing the forlorn child close to her. "Suppose you try and tell me all about your life—where it has been spent, and so forth. Maybe we shall get at something to guide us, and your father—"

"Will he come back do you think?" asked Clare, in a voice of unmistakable terror and disgust.

"I cannot tell, dear. Will you not be glad to see him?"

"No."

The negative was prompt and uncompromising. It was very evident that Clare did not want to see her father again. Little by little she told her story; not much to tell when she had recounted all her experiences.

Her first recollections were of a place where there was a great square in the shadow of a church with a high tower, where there were beautiful chimes, and dogs drew little carts in the street. Antwerp, Miss Gosforth guessed from the latter fact, and also a certain recollection of English being a good deal spoken round her as well as other languages.

Mixed up in the remembrance of this early period were a woman with black hair and eyes, and a foreign appearance, and her father. His was the one figure that never quite went out of the shifting scenes of her life. She remembered dimly a mean lodging and coarse fare in connection with this part of her life; then a blank; then the first school; a wretched place in a shabby quarter of Paris, where she learned little, and grew a great deal.

Then her father seemed to be better off, and removed her to a school at Dusseldorf, where she remained till she was taken away in a hurry and brought to Monk's Ford.

There had been money difficulties in connection with this last academy, and she had been spirited away, leaving all her clothes behind her.

It was a sorrowful and sordid story for a child to tell, but it was all she knew of her life herself. She had never been called Clare Templeton till she came to the Misses Chandos. She had been Clare Brandon to the best of her remembrance all her life. Mr. Gosforth drew his own conclusions from her narrative. He thought it extremely unlikely that the gentleman calling himself her father would ever reappear on the scene; who or what he was he could not guess. He would keep Clare from all harm, and make use of her in his house as long as his sister liked to have her, and then look out for some safe place of shelter for her, where she could be taught to earn her own living.

The bursting of the storm, and the discovery of the fraud that had been practised upon the Misses Chandos, seemed to make a different child of Clare, and to lift a load from her shoulders that had lain heavily upon her. She became a bright, pleasant girl, quiet and reserved with strangers, but loving to a degree to her benefactors, and a nimble little right hand to Miss Gosforth, who was something of an invalid, and wanted a handmaid at times.

Both brother and sister felt that they should find out some time who their *protégé* was. She was certainly absurdly like the portraits of Mr. Templeton, that were to be purchased everywhere; but then she was equally like the far handsomer man who had called himself her father; so that was nothing.

Two things might lead to some enlightenment. One was a little locket, which for some reason or

other her father had always enjoined her to keep; and the other an odd mark of a burn or scald on one of her arms. She could not recollect anything about it, so it must have been done in her infancy. The locket contained the portrait of a woman in one half, and a little infant in the other, which she believed were her mother and herself. She had no recollection of her mother; did not know whether she was dead or alive; but her father had always cursed and shown frightful temper whenever she had been alluded to; so she gathered that their married life had been unhappy. There was not much to go upon, but Mr. Gosforth said it might be a clue some time, and took the locket into his own keeping.

"A lady wishes to see you, sir."

The young secretary of the great Mr. Templeton smiled a queer little smile as he said the words.

The idea of any lady coming in such a fashion and demanding to see his chief without the faintest shadow of an appointment was too amazing to be anything but a joke; and Mr. Templeton himself looked as if he were of the same mind.

"A lady!" he said, looking up in astonishment. "What lady?"

"This is her card, sir. Bring that you will see her for a moment. Cannot tell her business to anyone else."

"Ah, that's what they all say. And then, when they get in, it resolves itself into something anyone else could have done for them just as well. Ask her her business, Power. Tell her I cannot undertake to see anyone except by appointment."

"I did, sir."

"What did she say?"

"Said she was sure you would see her if you remembered who she was; but that she could not speak of her affairs to a stranger."

"Miss Chandos," Mr. Templeton read from the card he held. "Ah, yes, I do remember. Show her in, Power, and say that I shall be engaged for the next few minutes. I don't know what I can do, but I think I know what she has come about."

Power ushered in the lady, and withdrew; and Miss Chandos, pale and altered, and very different from the important mistress of Monk's Ford, found herself in the presence of the man who had so long adored as a political god.

Now she saw the original of the lamented photograph, and knew that it was a speaking likeness, and that the clever scoundrel who had palmed himself off upon her—though startlingly like—was quite another person.

Mr. Templeton greeted her graciously, and put her at her ease with the finished courtesy of a gentleman, and then asked what he could do for her.

"I hardly know," gasped poor Miss Chandos. "I thought perhaps you might be able to help us, my sister and myself, to get a living somehow, we are well-nigh destitute now."

"Indeed! I am sorry. Not through anything connected with the unpleasant affair you once wrote me about, I trust?"

"Ah, yes; it is all through that," the poor lady replied, and then she told her story; how she had paid away most of the money that had come to her in Mr. Templeton's name, and had brought upon herself, not only the money troubles, but the obloquy of suspicion, and the ruin that comes of want of confidence. "We are looked upon as swindlers," she said, with tears. "No one will trust us with the education of their daughters; and we are not young, poor Dorothys and I, but we want work."

"It is a sad case," the great man said kindly. "I had no idea it was more than the matter of a few pounds—ten, I think, was the sum named. I have so much to do and think about that matters slip by me that I ought really to attend to. Will you tell me all about it, if you please—what the impudent scoundrel was like who posed as myself?"

"Very like you, Mr. Templeton," replied Miss Chandos; "so like that you might be brothers."

But the child—the little girl—is more like you than him."

"Ah, the little girl," Mr. Templeton said. He was busy picking up a paper that had fallen to the ground, and the stooping doubtless made the colour die out of his face. "It was a vile fraud! I have no daughter. I had but one child, and she is dead. I thought all England knew that."

"I thought so, too; but you—he—the man, said there were reasons why you did not want the fact of her being alive published, and, in short, I was completely deceived."

"So it seems, and, no doubt, cleverly, too. I assure you, my dear madam, if my darling were alive I should only be too proud to let all the world know the fact. It is the great grief of my life that I am childless."

There was a break in his voice as he spoke, and the keen eyes that were fixed upon her face seemed to grow dim for a moment, and his visitor felt that he was speaking the truth.

"Can you help us in any way?" she said, after a pause. "We cannot beg in our declining years, but there is much that we can do."

"I will try what I can do," Mr. Templeton said, and Miss Chandos knew that the little sentence meant a good deal from him.

He was a man who never promised anything he did not fulfil to the letter, and when he begged her address and told her she should hear from him she knew that somehow or other her sister and herself would be helped, and in a fashion that would not hurt the most sensitive feelings.

In less than a year the two ladies were prospering mightily in a boarding-house in the most fashionable part of Brighton. They were patronised in a quiet way by ladies and gentlemen of standing who wanted a refined and well-appointed home.

No one knew but themselves that the most popular man in England had almost made them a present of the place.

They had seen and signed all sorts of business documents, and were given to understand that it had been bought for an old song, and risen like a phoenix under their skilful management.

The purchase-money was a trifle to the great statesman, and he had been glad to help them, knowing that they had lost everything through being swindled in his name.

He frequently paid a visit to the pleasant boarding-house himself, passing a couple of idle days there now and then, and during one of these visits an event happened that nearly frightened his hostess out of her wits, and puzzled her not a little as well.

Miss Chandos was returning somewhat late one evening from a business errand, when she was suddenly accosted in a quiet street by a man, a wan, wild-looking creature, who shivered as he begged of her, though the night was hot, and looked altogether as if he were not long for this world.

She wondered vaguely who he was like and where she had seen his face before, and spoke to him gently.

She had scarcely uttered a word when he stared at her wildly, and fell down on the pavement at her feet with a half-scream, half-groan, that quickly brought a policeman to her side.

"Has he frightened you, ma'am?" the man asked, for the lady was ghastly pale. She had found out who it was that the man was like. It was the father of Clare Templeton, and the author of all the ruin that had fallen upon her!

CHAPTER VII.

ENLIGHTENED,

This man was picked up and taken to the workhouse, and Miss Chandos went home to tell her story to her sister, and, by accident, Mr. Templeton, who happened to be in the house at the time. He caught part of what she was saying, and begged to hear what had befallen her.

"You have no doubt that it was the same man!" he asked. "The very one who swindled you!"

"I am sure as I can be, he is so like you; there

is the same peculiar likeness, only the face is wan and haggard now; I wish I had given him something, he looked in a terrible plight."

"Ah, he will be taken care of," Mr. Templeton said. "I will inquire in the morning, if you like."

"Oh, thank you; I don't know why I want to help him, but I do."

"Coals of fire," said the gentleman, with a smile; "a man has only to be writhed and broken down, and no matter how deeply he may have wronged and injured a woman, she will forgive and help him."

He turned abruptly away, and Miss Chandos looked after him wonderingly. She had never seen him so agitated before.

He told her the next morning before he went back to town that he had made inquiries, but they had resulted in nothing—the unfortunate tramp had died in the night. He did not tell her that he had gone and looked at the dead man's face and stood beside him with compressed lips for a brief period, and had then turned to the master of the workhouse and told him, to his amazement, who he was, and desired that the dead tramp might be buried with all decency and decorum. He was not to be rattled to his rest "over the stones" in a pauper hearse, but carried to his grave with fitting solemnity.

"I know him," was all the explanation he gave of his generosity; but he did not tell Miss Chandos as much.

Five years later there died in that same workhouse an old woman, who had the laying out of dead bodies, who had consigned almost with her last breath a parcel to the master, to send to Mr. Templeton. She told a queer story about it—she had found it on the dead tramp's body, and had concealed it, fancying there might be money inside of it. There was only a written paper, and she had concealed it with something very like terror, for even in the workhouse the name of the great man was something to conjure by. She would wait till she could get out and then she would take counsel with some one what she should do. She had an ignorant notion that she might be ordered for immediate execution if she meddled in any affairs of one so much above her.

(Continued on page 208.)

FLOWER OF FATE.

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CHAPTER X.

"WHAT a delightful idea of yours to give a ball, Sir Keith!" cried Lady Anice. "I consider you are the kindest person I know."

Sir Keith Moreton's handsome face flushed.

"I am glad you are pleased," he said with a slight emphasis on the "you."

"I could not help being so; and another thing, Sir Keith, you must understand I am so easily pleased; it is very silly of me, I suppose. I ought to be grown out of such childlessness, but the thoughts of this ball quite excite me."

And Lady Anice looked up with a flush on her fair cheek, and her lips parted in a pretty babyish smile.

"You had one last week," Keith Moreton said, smiling down at her as he would at a child.

Lady Anice pouted.

"Oh, the country affair; that was very different to this, you know!"

Sir Keith could not help a thrill of pleasure at her innocent flattery.

"We must try and make it so, at any rate," he determined, quickly; "this ball will be spacious, that is one good thing."

"Indeed, yes!" and Lady Anice floated away a few steps in an impromptu waltz. "How I do love dancing!" she cried, gaily.

"Well, you get plenty of it, Anice," broke in the voice of Lord Dunmoor from a gallery that ran round the hall. "It seems to me you never do anything else."

"Brothers are always complimentary, you

know, Sir Keith." Lady Anice turned, with a pretty air of depreciation, to her host. "I call that unkind."

"So do I," declared Sir Keith, hastily. "Never mind, Lady Anice, we will take no notice of him; you shall dance as much as you like."

Lady Anice made a move at her brother, and flitted over the oak floor beside Sir Keith's tall form.

"Is Moreton Hall very large?" she asked, as they made their way to the conservatory.

"It is larger than this, considerably."

There was a shade on Sir Keith's face as he spoke of his home.

"It is a queer, rambling place," he went on, half to himself; "and I love every stick and stone of it!"

"And yet you will not live there! You are an anomaly!" laughed Lady Anice.

"I was happy there, Lady Anice, in my childhood days—so happy, that sometimes I am apt to think the boyhood of Keith Moreton must have developed into the manhood of some other being not myself. Then there came a blight, and then a sorrow that crushed all the gladness out of my young life."

"I know," breathed Lady Anice, softly. "You mean the death of your poor little sister."

Sir Keith nodded.

"Dunmoor has told me all about it," went on Lady Anice; "just as you told him all about that terrible night when your wicked stepmother treated you both so cruelly your father died and your baby sister was lost. I can assure you, Sir Keith, my blood has boiled many times over all you suffered then."

Lady Anice clenched her small hand.

"Such woman ought to be killed," she declared, with flashing eyes, "they are not fit to live!"

"You are an angel," breathed Sir Keith, involuntarily; he was inexpressibly touched by her interest in him.

"But—was it certain the poor little thing really died?" asked Lady Anice, dropping her voice to softness again.

"She must have perished," Sir Keith replied, sadly. "I was delirious at the time, but although only a boy when I got off my bed of fever, I searched high and low for my darling little Madge. Oh! Lady Anice, if you had known her you would understand how awful it was. She was so sweet, so lovely! I had tended her, kept her as well as I could from all harm, remembering what my mother had said, and then to wake up one day and find her gone."

His voice grew agitated.

"We were such companions; we played together, worked together; she brought all her childish troubles to me, dear mate! Sometimes I fancy she may be alive; I am always trying to picture my Madge, grown from a baby to a lovely woman. Sometimes I see this wonderful likeness in some girl, and I start with hope to claim her only to be disappointed. The other evening, when that operatic company was here, I could have sworn one of the actresses, a girl, young and gloriously handsome, was my dead sister. Alas! I soon found it was only another mistake of my brain; for her father was with her."

"Poor Sir Keith!" murmured Lady Anice, though her lips were compressed as she spoke of Vera. She hated the actress with all her small, spiteful heart for her beauty and her marvellous fascination.

"Ah! you are sympathetic," cried the young man, as they stood in the conservatory among the perfumed flowers. "You do not laugh at me for my folly."

"Laugh at you!" repeated Lady Anice, putting an intense tenderness in her voice and eyes; "no—no—I understand—I, too, love like you—my dear ones are my very existence."

Sir Keith, carried away by her sweetness, lifted her small hand to his lips.

"It is such women as you who make the world good, Lady Anice," he said, reverently. "Now let us forget my stupid troubles and think of this ball. Do as you will, design, alter, order; if you have the smallest fancy only

breath it to me, and if it is to be gratified it shall be done."

"Oh! Sir Keith," cried Lady Anice, clasping her hands together while her heart thrilled with genuine delight. The thought of power was happiness to her. "This is regal of you; but—are you not afraid to trust me?—You don't know me well yet."

"I would trust you to the world's end," he murmured, passionately.

The man's brave, honest nature was becoming enthralled by this siren's false beauty. He was too true himself to dream that the soft cadences of her voice, the tenderness in her eyes, the gentle sympathy, the womanly pity, were all assumed, and for his benefit. No, Keith Moreton judged all men and women by his own standard, and to him Anice Drac was one of the fairest and sweetest of Heaven's creatures.

He had known her only a short week, but that seemed already a year of great, strange happiness. Little did he think that while he listened to his grave sayings, Lady Anice was telling herself that she would marry him, she must marry him. The Moreton estates were of fabulous value; Sir Keith's long minority under the careful hands of trustees had enriched the property to a tremendous extent, Lady Moreton would be one of the wealthiest wives in England.

Lady Anice had heard all this from her brother, but she was not content; she examined the peerage, and got at the exact truth herself. Told done, she grew cool towards Lord Vivian, whose income was poverty compared to Sir Keith's, and would have turned her pretty back on Mr. Wenty Motte, also, had not that gentleman done the very same thing first, rushing off from Beaconswole in the train of handsome Maggie Delane.

The Earl felt momentarily piqued at first, but after two days he laughed good-naturedly at his folly, and watched daintily Lady Anice "go in" for Keith Moreton with much amusement, and it must be confessed a little feeling of pity for the young baronet. George Drac watched also with a decided sensation of wrath; he resented his good-natured chum being hauling into the clutches of those white avaricious hands, but he could do nothing.

When Sir Keith proposed to give a ball, he invited all the Beaconswole party to the Gill for the affair, and although the Countess was loth to accept the invitation, Lady Anice over-ruled her, and they came.

And for once it seemed as if Lady Anice was about to play a successful game. Sir Keith was growing more and more enraptured, and the majestic fortune he owned was just within her grasp.

She turned away from his passionate whisper with a lovely blush on her face.

"Well, then," she observed, "since you give me consent I will become the head. What do you say to a cotillion, Sir Keith?"

"A cotillion—certainly," he answered, at once.

"Ob, wouldn't it be great fun to have a masked ball! Oh, I do love 'bal masques'; everyone is so surprised when it is time to unmask!"

"You are queen of the revels," Sir Keith said, with a smile and a bow.

"Then a 'bal masque' it shall be; there need be no fuss, no delay; send up to a costumer's for dominoes and masks, and we can wear our evening toilettes underneath. Will that do?"

"Excellently."

"Then run away at once and have the message sent to London, because all the people around must come masked you know. No, you can't stay any longer with me, you must obey me. Go!"

Lady Anice pointed her small hand with a laughing gesture to the door. Sir Keith dropped on his knee in mock reverence; then, as he disappeared, she sank into one of the many faint seats scattered about, and gave herself up to delicious reveries of the glorious future that lay before her as Keith Moreton's wife. No kindly thought of him touched her mind; in truth, she regarded him with contempt. A man who could mourn for so many years the loss of a sister must be a

weak, foolish creature. Lady Anice opined; fortunately she had no such sentiment in her nature; life would not be worth living if one gave way to regret and sorrow on all hands.

Footsteps sounded on the marble pavement, and looking up hurriedly Lady Anice saw her brother.

"Well," she said, impatiently. She could read his face, and she knew that there was something Lord Dunmoor wished to say.

"Will you come to my room for a few minutes, Anice, or to your own, it does not matter which?" asked the young man, quietly.

"No," his sister replied, sharply; "if you have anything to say, say it out loud. I am listening."

"I prefer, as a rule, to discuss disagreeable subjects privately; but you have so little sense of natural pride, Anice, that as this matter concerns you entirely I will speak here."

Lord Dunmoor drew a letter from his pocket.

"Do you see this?" he held it towards his sister.

"Yes," she observed, laconically.

"It is a lawyer's letter, telling me that proceedings are being instituted against me by Roderick, of Paris, for your extravagance. I suppose you thought I should submit to this, Anice, that once having given my name you would glide on serenely to the end, leaving me to fight everything for you. You were mistaken. This letter came a few days ago; immediately on receiving it I wrote back to the lawyers and informed them that you were your own mistress, of proper age, and, moreover, possessed of an income on your own account; that neither your father, your mother, or myself would be responsible for your debts, and that it was you alone who could and must be sued. Consequent on this I received another letter, stating that Roderick would give you one more chance—would accept half the money if sent at once, but that if you ignored her as you have previously done, a writ would be issued immediately."

Lady Anice was very pale as her brother ceased. Her hands were locked tight together.

"You call yourself my brother," she said, half crying with vexation and anger, "and yet do all this behind my back! You are horribly cruel, Dunmoor."

"No, I am just," Lord Dunmoor answered, promptly. "I have remonstrated till I am tired. I have paid already too many hundreds for you; it is you who are unkind. Why did you not tell me you had given me as your scapegoat to Roderick; it would have been more honourable, but, as it is—"

"As it is," cried Lady Anice, jumping to her feet, and clasping her brother's arm, "dear Dunmoor, you will see to this for me. Yes, I was wrong, I know it; but then—"

Lord Dunmoor released his arm, coldly.

"No, Anice," he said, decidedly, "I wash my hands of the whole affair; you must learn what truth and honour mean. Experience is the only master that will teach you."

Lady Anice produced her small cambric handkerchief and pressed it to her eyes, where no tears were! But she knew her brother well—he might be just and highly-principled, but he was tender-hearted as a woman.

"Do help me, Dunmoor, do," she pleaded, her voice broken with pretended sobs.

Lord Dunmoor stood undecided.

"Nearly fifteen hundred pounds, Anice," he said, in a gentler voice; "where is it to come from? What have you done with your last quarter's remittance? I have not the means or the power to get you this money."

"A mortgage on one of the farms," murmured Lady Anice, still wiping her eyes.

Lord Dunmoor sighed.

"Poor old dad! Was it for this you worked so hard!" he said to himself—to his sister he was silent.

"Dunmoor," she said, suddenly coming nearer, and nestling her pretty head on his shoulder, "you will help me; think, I am not the only one who has been extravagant, and I promise, I swear, I won't ask you again. I will try and make my income do. I will, indeed."

Lord Dunmoor moved uneasily; he was fond of his sister, though he knew her shallowness thoroughly.

"I must talk to mother," he said, after a pause.

Lady Anice sighed.

"Poor mamma," she breathed, "she has so many worries; need we trouble her about this?"

She feared the interview between her mother and Lord Dunmoor.

Lord Dunmoor's face softened.

"Ah! Anice, if you would always speak like this, if you would only show a little kindness and affection to our mother, it would make such a difference, dear, to her life. Think of all her anxieties and cares, of our poor father lying ill at home!"

Lady Anice, with her face hidden on her brother's arm, made a move of impatience. All this bored her exceedingly; but she was clever—she read the signs of wavering in Lord Dunmoor's manner, and she noted her beat.

"I do, dear," she whispered. "Ah, I have been thoughtless and wicked; but, Dunmoor, I will be different in future, and listen, dear, I think—I hope—"

She lifted her face suffused with blushes.

Lord Dunmoor looked at her.

"You mean that Morstoun will propose."

"I am sure of it; he has given me *cartes blanches* about this ball, everything is put into my hands. I am queen of all, he says; that can only mean one thing."

"Well, Anice! If it comes about as you think I sincerely pray you may be happy. Keith is the best fellow on earth; don't play with him. He wouldn't understand it—it would break his heart."

"I could not do it," said Anice, with a little sigh; then she added,—

"You will help me, Dunmoor. If—if Sir Keith really intends to make me his wife, think what a difference it will be to me—nay, to us all; and if—"

"Dear, if Keith makes you his wife, well and good; all his wealth will be at your disposal, but not for us. Once you are married, Anice, our greatest care will be removed, for although you do not think it you are, and always have been, our first consideration. Now, kiss me. I will arrange this matter for you; and, Anice, speak kindly to our mother, dear; her heart aches for love and sympathy from you, her only daughter."

"I will," cried Lady Anice, fervently. She stood on tiptoe and kissed her brother, then waved her hand as he strode away.

"Oh! dear me, what a bore and a prig Dunmoor is! Well, Roderick is off my mind, thank goodness. I was growing uncomfortable about her wretched bill. Keith Morstoun must propose—he shall! I must be his wife," she said to herself.

Sir Keith coming towards her quickly at this moment saw her fair brows knit and the little cambric handkerchief held in her hand.

"The message is despatched, Lady Anice," he said, breaking in on his musings; "but what is the matter?—you look distressed. Has anything happened?"

His tone was exquisitely tender.

Lady Anice put her handkerchief away with a sigh.

"Dunmoor has been talking to me—my poor father—"

"He is not worse!" asked Sir Keith eagerly.

Lady Anice shook her head.

"No, only as we were discussing business the thought of him lying helpless and ill at home suddenly came to me. It seems so wrong of me to be happy when he is so afflicted."

"You are happy!" murmured Sir Keith involuntarily.

"More happy than I have ever been in my life."

Lady Anice raised her eyes to his.

"Now," she cried, "to our work; we must have heaps of flowers, Sir Keith—perfect mountains. Oh! how busy I shall be!"

"You must not grow tired, or—"

Sir Keith stopped.

A man-servant had approached.

"Mr. Darnley has arrived, sir, and asks to see you."

Sir Keith uttered a pleased expression, which Lady Anice did not echo.

"I am so glad your cousin has arrived," declared Sir Keith; "will you excuse me while I go and see him?"

"Certainly," said Lady Anice; "I have heaps to do, so please go at once, but don't stop long."

The look accompanying these last words caused a thrill of delight to the young host; and as he hurried to Rex Darnley's room his pulses beat in a very tempest of glad anticipation.

It had transpired that Rex and Sir Keith were old friends; they had met abroad and travelled some weeks together on the Continent, Sir Keith using his mother's name, as he wished to enjoy his travels in peace and quietness; and if it had become generally known that the enormously wealthy young baronet had been in any particular hotel, he would have become besieged by mamas and their marriageable daughters. Rex Darnley therefore knew nothing when Lord Dunmoor spoke of his friend Moretoun, and it was only when Rex and Sir Keith had come face to face that they recognised one another.

"Well, old fellow, how are you? So glad you have come; began to fear you would not, after all!" welcomed Sir Keith, as he entered his guest's apartment.

"Thanks, Keith. I know you are glad to see me," Rex returned quietly, as he gripped his friend's hand. "By Jove! as Wenty would say, you are going to be very festive. A ball! What does Bruce say?"

"Oh! he doesn't care, rather likes it. To tell you the honest truth, I don't see much of George; he's smitten with a girl in the neighbourhood, and is always riding over there."

"Got your house full?" queried Rex as he sat down at his writing-table.

"All the Beaconsfield party."

"Vivian here!"

"Yes; that is, he was, but yesterday he left; said he had some business to transact at Abbey Chester. He is coming back to the ball, however."

There was a deep line on Rex Darnley's face.

"Abbey Chester!" he repeated. "Why what can take Eric there?"

Sir Keith looked surprised.

"Perhaps his agent lives there," he observed. "Anyway, that's where he is gone, I know. Do you want anything, old chap? Ring if you do. You will find me in the hall, busy preparing for the 'bal masque' to-morrow night."

Rex nodded absently, and Sir Keith went out of the room.

Rex rose, unstrapped a bundle of newspapers and drew out one.

"Abbey Chester," he muttered; "I could not be mistaken; no, here it is." Nathaniel De Mortimer's Operatic Company, gigantic success, magnificent triumphal progress, patronised by the Earl of Vivian and all the nobility. Miss Delane, Miss Vera De Mortimer, &c., as large as life. The Eric must be correct, and Eric has gone there. What can he have gone for?"

He threw down the paper and paced the floor, but the more he moved the deeper grew the lines in his face and the pain in his heart.

Abbey Chester was a big manufacturing town surrounded by sentinels in the shape of furnaces and chimneys which at odd intervals vomited great clouds of thick, black smoke, tainting the air and darkening all the immediate neighbourhood with their greasy, sooty touch.

Vera shuddered as the train, bearing the company, rolled through these furnaces. It seemed as if they cut off for ever all memory of Bentley, with its sweet, pure air, its trees tinted with their autumnal red and brown, its quaint village, and, last of all, its dream of short-lived happiness. She sat quietly looking out of the window. They had played three nights at a small town before coming on here, and Vera had sung and acted as in a dream. She needed not Maggle's marry, kind voice, nor the growling oaths of her father; she only saw Rex Darnley's

dark, handsome face as she had last seen it in their walk back to their lodgings.

If Mr. De Mortimer had the smallest idea of who his opponent was in the fierce, brief, struggle that night, he kept the knowledge to himself. Vera had fully expected to hear a torrent of abuse, and was surprised at her father's silence. Perhaps he was ashamed of his violence and his threats; it would be unlike his former character, still it might be so.

Vera was ever trying to root out the instinctive dislike and contempt for her father that would grow in her heart. Looking back to her childhood she had always shrank from him at the sound of his voice or the touch of his hand. She would turn and cling to her mother's side—that poor, pale, sweet, patient, mother—who was the angel of all that was perfect to the girl growing into womanhood.

Madame De Mortimer, as the play-bills styled her, was an actress; her voice was of a sweet, low, pathetic timbre, her artistic talents great. It was a theme of great wonderment in the profession how Emilie Lancy, the pretty, piquante charming girl, had linked her lot with that of Nathaniel De Mortimer, scoundrel and blackleg. Immediately after their marriage the De Mortimers had set sail for India and Australia, where from time to time tidings reached their fellow-actors at home of the fabulous sums of money Emilie De Mortimer's talent was bringing to her husband. Then for awhile they were lost sight of. Then they appeared again, Madame De Mortimer grown into a prematurely old woman, worn with over-work, bad treatment, and illness.

Her one joy in life was her child Vera, who at once became the pet of the company wherever they went.

She was a strangely beautiful child, with wondrous eyes and deep red golden hair; there was no trace of Emilie Lancy's brunet prettiness in this fair little creature, nor was there a suspicion anywhere that Vera belonged to Nathaniel De Mortimer. But that the child was Emilie's there could be no doubt. She adored her with more than a mother's common love, and in return Vera worshipped the woman. To all inquiries as to whether Vera was to be an actress, Madame De Mortimer would shudder, and declare that sooner would she see her darling in the grave.

Time passed; the mother, worn by illness, sank to the grave.

Vera never forgot the last week of her beloved protectress's life. Speech was impossible almost, she was so weak, yet the girl could never rid her mind of the thought that her mother had some burden on her heart she wished to leave behind. Over and over again Vera caught an imploring look from the dying woman to her husband, but Nathaniel saw it not, and sat stolidly reading his paper and waiting till all was over.

Emilie died with her thin hand in Vera's and the longing, wistful look in her eyes till the last; and when she was buried in a quiet village churchyard close to the cottage where she had lain till the last, Vera realised to the full all her mother had been.

Without a moment's hesitation De Mortimer put her on the stage; Vera pleaded, all to no avail—either that, or she must starve.

She was not frightened at the word starvation. She was a strange nature to meet in this century when all is false and unreal. The doctrines of her dead mother arose. He was her father, it was her duty to obey—she obeyed him.

Nathaniel rubbed his hands many times over the success of his plan. He foresaw from the first how great Vera's triumph must be if properly worked, and as he sat in the train that carried him into Abbey Chester he felt he already held the end of the thread in his hand that would pull the money in.

"Vera, wrap up your throat," he commanded loudly, as they stood on the platform sorting the luggage; "this cursed fog is enough to kill anyone."

Vera obeyed silently.

"Ugh!" cried Maggie Delane, shivering. "What a beastly hole! I wonder where we shall find rooms, Vera? I expect we shall have to sleep

in those chimneys; the place seems nothing else."

"We shall find some place," Vera said, thickening regretfully of Amy Watson and the sweet-smelling rooms they had left.

"Well, let us hope so. Oh!" Maggie uttered a loud exclamation and then grew rosy red. "Mr. Motte, where on earth did you spring from?"

"Been here an hour waiting for you, train came in wrong platform. By Jove! yes. Jolly glad to see you, Miss Dolane, and you too, Miss De Mortimer—er. I say, thought perhaps you didn't know this beastly place, so I—By Jove! let me carry that."

And Mr. Motte grasped a bag in either hand, and led the way to a brougham he had ordered.

"So what?" asked Maggie, as she alighted her hand through his arm.

"So I just locked you out some rooms, and I took them. Hope you will forgive me, but, by Jove! you might have walked the town all night; upon my word, yes!"

"You are very kind to have taken so much trouble!" Vera said, warmly.

Maggie looked pleased. "Yes, you are good," she added. "I say, Vera, this is better than tramping about in the fog."

"Glad you are pleased."

And Mr. Motte's face beamed with delight.

"Couldn't possibly think of letting you walk about in this weather," he said, speaking to both, but looking at Maggie, who blushed again. "No, by Jove! no—not fit for a dog. Here we are. Not a bad situation considering the town, is it?"

"Indeed, no!" Vera said.

She could not help being touched by his kindness, and in her heart she thought she read truly, that his devotion to Maggie was sincere and honourable. He was so frank that she felt there was no injury to their pride in accepting his kindness.

"Beautiful!" cried Maggie, "but" drawing back a little, "much too dear."

"Not a bit of it; you see—"

Maggie ran up the steps, and had a short parley with the landlady.

"Well," she said, as she came down again, "they are the very cheapest rooms we have ever had, Vera."

Mr. Motte whistled, and tried to look as if he had never seen the house or the landlady before. He assisted to get all their boxes into the hall, then prepared to take his leave.

"I say I must go now. I shall be in front to-night. Er—Mrs. Landlady, please see that these ladies are comfortable; their health is public property. Yes, by Jove! Mr.—good-bye."

"Au revoir," said Vera, coming forward, and taking his outstretched hand, "and thank you again and again. Maggie, there is a good hour before we want tea. Wouldn't you like a stroll with Mr. Motte?"

"The very thing," cried Wenty, in delight.

Maggie just stooped to kiss the flower-like face.

"By Jove, Miss De Mortimer!" cried Wenty, as Maggie disappeared to divest herself of her ulster, and settle her hat more comfortably on her pretty head, "you are a brick! I've been dying to see her, and to—to—to Can you keep a secret?" he suddenly asked.

Vera smiled.

"Yes," she answered gravely.

"Then I am in love with Maggie."

"Is that all?" asked Vera, with another smile. "Why, I have known that these days past."

Mr. Motte stared.

"No, have you? By Jove! I thought I had kept it most beautifully to myself."

Vera laughed right out.

"Then, Miss Vera," he went on eagerly, "do you think she has seen? Do you think she likes me?"

"I am sure of that. She could not help it," Vera said, softly.

Mr. Motte looked radiant, then his face fell, and he sighed.

"She is so beautiful. Lots of chaps I know are raving about her. Do you think she would have me? I have a decent income, though it was made in soap, and—"

"Here she is!" Vera whispered; "ask her." Maggie came in singing. She glanced curiously from one to the other.

"Now what state secrets have you two been discussing?" she cried, gaily.

Vera only smiled, but to her astonishment, Wenty burst out suddenly with,

"I have been telling her I love you awfully. Yes, by Jove! I do, indeed, Maggie!"

"Well, I am sure."

And Maggie collapsed into a chair and grew rosy red.

"Yes, and I asked her if she thought you would have me, and she said she thought you would; and oh! Maggie, do say yes. I simply can't go on like this any longer; by Jove! no!"

"Say yes to what?" asked Maggie, in a low voice.

"To—will you be my wife?"

Maggie looked at him for an instant, then rose and walked to the window, and Vera saw her eyes were full of tears.

"Have you thought well?" she said, at last; "remember, I am an actress; my people are all mixed with the stage. I am poor. Thank Heaven, I am honest. Still, remember your people; they—"

"I haven't got any, and if I had I should not ask them," declared Wenty, stoutly. "No, by Jove! I wouldn't."

"But you are rich," went on Maggie, hurriedly; "I am very, very poor. I am nobody, while your family—"

"Boiled soap. I don't see any difference; do you, Miss De Mortimer?"

But Vera had slipped away with a mist before her eyes and an ache in her heart. She did not envy Maggie, dear kind Maggie, who had been such a friend to her. No; but still she could not help contrasting her own lot with this other girl. Maggie would have everything that love and money could give her, while she must live on toiling in a life that was hateful to her; lost to all that her nature craved for, the beautiful, the honest, the true. She sank down beside her bed and knelt there.

But she was not left long.

A quick step followed, and Maggie's arms were round her.

"Vera, I am so happy—so very happy," she whispered; "but I won't forget you, dear; you shall share in our happiness. I could not take it unless you did."

Vera rose, still imprisoned in Maggie's hold.

"Don't think me selfish, Maggie," she said, wistfully, "but oh, at times I feel so wretched, I think my heart will break. But there, dear, forgive me; I won't even let a cloud appear on the horizon of your joy. I saw it coming, and I think he is worthy of you, my true, dear friend. You deserve all the happiness you can get."

"Listen, Vera," Maggie whispered, "when—when Wenty and I are married, you shall just leave the stage and come and live with us."

Vera shook her head with a faint smile.

"There now, run away, Mr. Motte will grow impatient."

Maggie kissed her again, then tripped into the next room, and Vera soon heard the front door bang, proclaiming they were gone. She spent the hour of their walk in unpacking their numerous boxes and packages, and making the rooms as comfortable as possible, pushing most valiantly all regret and pain away.

Maggie returned alone, her face was radiant. She held out her hand to Vera, on the third finger glistening a lovely ring.

"He is so kind, so generous, so dear. Oh! Vera, won't the old people be glad! I can scarcely believe it. I keep fancying I shall wake up and find it all a dream."

"Just look at your left hand, then," Vera said, laughingly; "and now, Miss Marguerite Delane, if you will condescend to things earthly, the meal awaits, and the overture will play in an hour."

So she chatted away, and Maggie, looking at her, told herself gladly that Vera was quite happy, little thinking that the gaiety was all assumed, to hide how aching Vera's heart was at the thought of her desolate lot.

The brougham was waiting for them when



"DO YOU SEE THIS?" HE SAID, AS HE HELD THE LETTER TOWARDS HER.

they descended the steps, and they drove to the theatre in luxury. Mr. Wentworth Motte certainly knew how his future wife should be treated.

Enflamed by the knowledge of the Earl's patronage, the inhabitants of Abbey Chester flocked in their dozens to see the "show." Mr. De Mortimer waxed more pompous, and equally he evinced a stronger desire to imbibe more liquor as his success was assured.

The piece was changed nightly, giving the artists plenty to do.

Mr. Motte demurred a little, and spoke of his lady-love leaving the company; but Maggle was too honest and too business-like to agree. She had signed to the end of the tour, and she would keep to the letter of her bond; so Mr. Motte was forced to be content with surrounding her with all the luxury he could till the tour was ended.

Vera achieved another success.

As it happened, Abbey Chester was crammed with a number of scientific men, called together by a congress; and tempted by the names of the various operas performed by Mr. Nathaniel De Mortimer's company many of them came to witness the performance, and one and all fell in love with Vera.

On the third night, as she was passing from the wing to her room, she heard her name called softly.

"Miss De Mortimer."

She turned; there beside her, looking wonderfully handsome in his immaculate evening dress, with some costly flowers in his hand, stood Eric Lord Vivian.

"My lord!" she exclaimed, in surprise.

"Yes, it is I," the Earl said, smiling at her astonishment. "I have been in front; you look as if you thought I had dropped from the clouds."

"You startled me," Vera murmured, her heart throbbing painfully. Unconsciously her eyes wandered over the Earl's shoulder to find that other face which had met hers thus so often.

before. "Have you come to stay in Abbey Chester, my lord?"

The Earl laughed a little confusedly.

"Well, that all depends," he said; "but you have not said you are glad to see me, and look! I have brought you some flowers."

Vera took them.

"They are very beautiful!" she said, simply.

"Thank you very much."

"Won't you say you are glad to see me?" pleaded Lord Vivian.

Vera hastily put her flowers down on a chair.

"That is my cue, my lord," she said, hurriedly; and the next instant she was on the stage again.

The Earl sighed a little vexedly, then feeling a touch on his shoulder, he turned.

"Ah! De Mortimer," he said.

"Your lordship's humble servant," Nathaniel bowed low.

He was attired as a heavy father, and in a white wig, with heavy white moustaches covering his coarse mouth, he looked almost handsome.

"I am delighted to see you, my lord."

The Earl nodded; he was listening to Vera's sweet voice.

"Have you managed that, may I ask, my lord?" asked Mr. De Mortimer, sinking his tones to a confidential whisper.

The Earl turned.

"Yes."

"And he will come!"

"Yes," said the Earl again.

"When?"

"To-morrow night."

Nathaniel De Mortimer rubbed his hands softly with glee, and his eyes glistened.

"I am deeply obliged to you, my lord," he said, promptly. "You have given my child a footing on the first rung of the ladder. It will be her own fault now if she doesn't mount to the top in two twinkles."

"I sincerely hope so," the Earl said, quietly.

"I suppose Robinson is the best man to have asked?"

"The very best, the very best," assented Vera's father. "As manager of the 'Thespis' he is the one and only person to be asked. I shall take care she is at her best to-morrow night, and unless I am a Dutchman she will get the offer of an engagement at the 'Thespis' before she can turn round, my lord; and all through you. You will have been her benefactor."

"Indeed, what I have done is little; but I sincerely trust it may be beneficial to your daughter. I never heard so rarely sweet a voice."

"Pure in every note, like a nightingale; sing with feeling too. What! my cue! Will your lordship pardon me; we will continue our conversation at—"

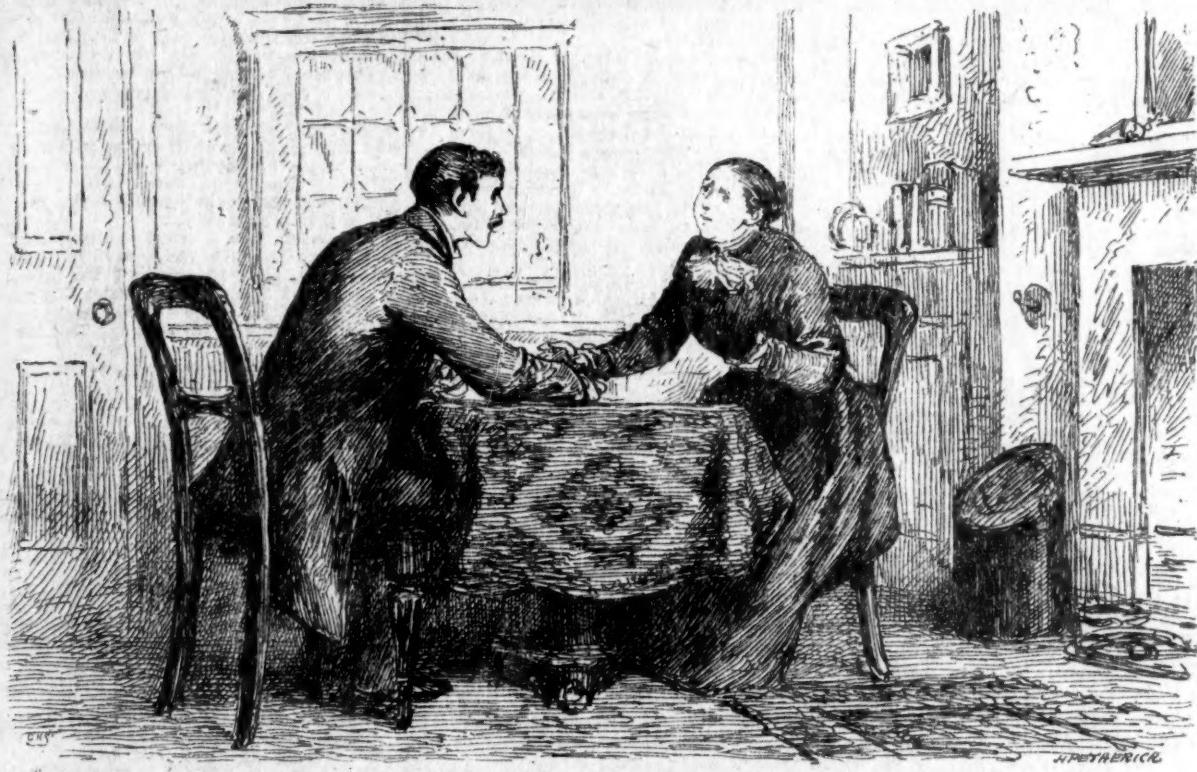
And Mr. De Mortimer vanished.

The Earl stood on watching as well as he could the slender form flitting about on the stage, while his breast was filled with a mass of troubled thoughts.

Had he done wisely and right in using his influence and bringing this London manager down to see the girl? And was it, after all, only interest in her artistic career that led him to work on her behalf. Was it not rather a feeling of something dangerously akin to pity for this refined lovely being that filled the heart of Eric Earl of Vivian?

(To be continued.)

ABOUT 35 miles from Nishapur, in Khorassan, are the celebrated turquoise mines of Persia, the only mines in the world producing this fashionable stone. They are situated in a mountainous region, 5,000ft. or 6,000ft. above the sea level, and employ perhaps 1,500 persons. The concession is about 40 square miles in extent, including a few villages, the turquoise, salt, and other mines.



"PLEASE TELL ME ALL YOU CAN!" SAID SIR GUY.

VERNON'S DESTINY.

—:—

CHAPTER XII.

LADY DECIMA VERNON rejoiced with an intense gladness when she read in the paper of Nell Charteris's marriage. There are some women (and alas! so numerous a class that we all must have met one or two in our life's journey), who, good and kind to all those near and dear to them, can yet rejoice in a calamity which does not touch them or theirs.

Guy Vernon's mother knew well enough from her son's description that Captain Denzil was a man little fitted to make a woman happy; that the strongest feeling of his nature was a guilty love for Mrs. Morton.

She had seen Helen Charteris, and knew that she was a pure, innocent girl, with a tender heart, and almost ultra-sensitive nature; and yet this lady, whom her little world considered a pattern of all virtues, rejoiced when she read that the motherless, fatherless child, whom, in spite of herself, she had pitied, was bound for life to a man so utterly degraded that most of Belgrave's matrons had closed their doors against him.

"Safe!" said the Lady Decima, when, on a bleak January morning, she read that Helen Charteris had given her fair young life to Reginald Denzil's keeping. "She can never injure my boy now! A chivalrous pity would have made him interest himself about her, and if they had become intimate, he must have guessed what I know already. Well, there is no fear of that now. Guy will have nothing but contempt for Mrs. Reginald Denzil!"

And my lady put her elegant slippers feet on the fender to enjoy the warmth of the bright fire, and sipped her coffee with extreme enjoyment.

No thrill of pity touched her for the young life wrecked by a moment's folly. She never even cast a thought to the future of the girl in faultless evening dress took the head of the

who had never wronged her unless, indeed, it was by presuming to exist!

But the Lady Decima was not to have only cause for rejoicing. Very soon came the news of the accident, written by Dr. Charteris himself, and begging her, for her son's own sake, not to come to the Hall, but to leave him to the care of those who were already nursing him.

"It is clear to me," wrote the kind physician, "that Sir Guy has had some terrible shock and anxiety apart from the accident. His chance of recovery is far better with strangers than with anyone who could recall, however indirectly, his state of mind before the collision. My son was his college friend, my daughter is a better nurse than many hospital 'Sisters'; believe me, you had better leave him in our hands. If there should be dangerous symptoms, or he should ask for you, I promise to telegraph at once."

Lady Decima had just prudence enough to see the wisdom of the doctor's wishes. She loved her boy with a devotion that was the master-passion of her life, and so she denied herself the pleasure of going to his sick-bed, and waited with as much patience as she could for the time when he was sufficiently recovered to return to her.

Just as she sat awaiting him before Christmas did she take up her position once more, now as then.

At the first sound of the carriage wheels she hurried into the hall to greet him, but there was a difference she felt no illness alone could have made. Sir Guy looked as though he was years older than when they parted—graver, sterner, with a nameless something gone out of his face. Even the mother who bore him trembled as she gazed at the handsome features.

"Guy, I am so thankful you are here, my dear! Time has been one long suspense to me since I heard of the accident."

Sir Guy looked as though he would gladly dispense with her remarks. He went upstairs to change his clothes; and coming down in even cast a thought to the future of the girl in faultless evening dress took the head of the

dinner table as calmly as though he had not been away for weeks, and hovered for some of them between life and death.

Lady Decima was half frightened in spite of herself. This deep gravity, this strange reserve, seemed to her positive cruelty when they had been parted for so long, and he had been given back to her, as it were, from the jaws of death.

"I shall never have an hour's peace now, Guy, when you are away from me."

"I am sorry for that, mother; because as soon as I am quite restored I mean to start on a long journey."

"My dear!" Then, with a strange pleading in her voice which was very touching, coming from one usually so stately and dignified, she asked. "Couldn't you take me with you, Guy? I would try not to be nervous or get into your way; but, oh! my dear, if you go roaming about alone again I shall never have a minute's comfort."

Sir Guy smiled faintly. He was a good son, and though the very heart within his breast ached with sorrow, he could pity his mother's anxiety.

"My dear old lady," using the name he had given her so long ago that the term of 'old lady' was so inappropriate as to show it was used merely in endearment. "My dear old lady, you don't know what you ask—you would be wretched!"

"When are you going, Guy?"

"I have not the faintest idea."

"We might plan out a very nice tour. We could go to Paris for Easter and then push on," suggested Lady Decima, whose ideas of foreign travel were of the vaguest.

"But I am not going for pleasure this time, mother. I am tired of roaming and it is only a solemn duty takes me away from home."

Lady Decima stared at him. She began to fear the accident had in some way affected his brain. What duty could he possibly have, save

to her his mother. What could make it seem to him his duty to go abroad?

"I don't understand," she said fretfully. "You say it is your duty to go abroad, and yet you declare you have not the faintest idea where you are going. I can't reconcile the two statements at all, Guy."

"You have changed them somewhat, mother. I said I was going on a long journey, and that it was my duty to go. I don't think I ever mentioned the word 'abroad'."

"It is very hard," said Lady Decima. "Why can't I go with you, instead of being wretched here?"

"I never thought you were wretched here, mother. I believed you loved the Grange dearly!"

"Isn't it natural I should love the place which was your dear father's, and is now yours?"

"Gently, mother. I don't think my father ever felt this place to be his. As for me, from the day I was old enough to understand the miserable story, I have longed to hand over the place to its rightful owner. I have waited, hoping, poor creature, she might come back of her own accord; and because—coward that I am—I shrank from awaking any scandal along our name; but my mind is made up now. As soon as I have regained my old strength I leave Vernon Grange to return to it no more until I can bring my unhappy cousin home to rule as its mistress, or have proof positive that she is dead, and has left no child to inherit her claim."

"Guy, this is madness!"

"Mother," asked the young man, gravely, "has the Grange brought any happiness to those who occupied it?" Then, as she shivered beneath his glance, his voice softened. "Can we not trace back my father's premature death to his unjust possession of this grand old place?"

"I don't know what you call injustice, Guy," cried Lady Decima, indignantly. "I'm sure your uncle's daughter behaved abominably, and he made a will, and left the property to your father."

"But there are grave doubts in point of law whether he could disinherit his daughter. Apart from that, on his death-bed he repented his rashness; his one cry was for his child. He prayed those about him to see her righted. Mother, you know that death-bed promise was broken. I ask you, what good but unjust gains have done us?"

Lady Decima was discomfited.

"The Grange is yours in point of law, Guy. The entail was cut off years ago. As for that old rumour, that it was revived, that is nonsense. I should like to see who could prove it."

"And the promise given to my great-uncle on his death-bed. How about that, mother?"

"Sick people's whims must be honoured," said the Lady Decima, irritably; "besides, Magdalene has never been heard of since. Of course she must be dead. Why, she would be turned fifty now!"

"I think you are nearly her age, mother, but it has not followed, as a matter of course, that you are dead."

"She had forfeited all claim to be considered. She had brought disgrace upon her name."

"I don't know," said Guy, passing one hand across his forehead, as though a sudden thought had pained him. "Of course I have only heard of her. She was young and beautiful; she was neglected, and left entirely alone. A young artist came across her path, and fascinated by her charms made love to her. His was the only affection she had ever known, and the poor girl preferred it to her magnificent desolation. She left the home where she had only been thought a nuisance, and married the man of her choice."

"Who already had a wife living."

"That has never been proved. If the woman who came to my uncle and protested she was Clifford's wife had really been so, don't you think she would have pursued her husband and her rival? In my belief, it was just a trumped-up story to obtain money from my great-uncle."

"If Magdalene had been Mrs. Clifford," retorted Lady Decima, "she would have had nothing to be ashamed of, and would surely have

put in her claim to Vernon Grange on her father's death."

Guy sighed.

"There is no convincing you, mother; but I tell you my mind is made up. I will not have this remorse eating like a cancer into my life; the fraud has done me harm enough already."

Lady Decima looked amazed.

"Harm! Why, your career has been one long triumph; you were the most successful man of your day at Epsford. Whatever you touch prospers, and if you would but give up your quixotic notions, and settle down quietly at home, you might be the happiest man in the country."

Guy smiled half scornfully.

"I tell you, mother, this inheritance has been my curse; but for it I should have followed some profession on leaving college, and long before this have made an honourable competence. But for this false position I might be a contented married man, but I have had to flee all thoughts of love and marriage. How could I marry, as the seeming owner of Vernon Grange and its thousands, knowing in my heart I possessed nothing but my father's modest fortune?"

"Four hundred a year!" said Lady Decima, thoughtfully. "I see now why you have always been so economical, Guy."

"Ay! As for you, mother, you have your jointure and your own portion. Even if Mr. Clifford appeared to-morrow you would have ample to maintain you according to your rank."

"And nothing will convince you, Guy!"

"Nothing."

"You are blighting all your prospects."

"My prospects have been blighted already. The only ambition left me is to be able to stand street and face the whole world, knowing I am no longer a fraud and a deception, but honestly what I seem."

Lady Decima groaned.

"And when shall you start off on your wild-goose chase, for that's what I consider it, Guy?"

"Not till after Easter. There will be a good deal of business to arrange, for I am quite resolved not to return until I have accomplished my object."

"You will write to me sometimes, Guy?"

"Of course I will, mother. My headquarters will be London at the first. I must find the certificate of Magdalene Vernon's marriage before I can sit in the matter."

"Perhaps she never was married?"

Guy looked at his mother sternly. There were times when, fond and affectionate parent that she was, she yet tried him terribly.

"I know from family papers," he said, slowly, "that she was married! The ceremony may have been illegal, but it certainly took place. I have seen a letter of hers signed Magdalene Clifford, and she would not be likely to use that name unless she believed it her own."

"A letter of hers, Guy? When I did not know she ever wrote to her father?"

"She may have written many times. I don't know, but this special letter must have come to the Grange while her father was stricken with the illness from which he never recovered. Its seal was unbroken—it and my father best know who unsealed it.

Lady Decima was speechless.

It was so long ago, she had almost forgotten the little episode. There are some things, reader, which it is most convenient for us to forget.

"I found it only to-day," said Sir Guy. "I went into the room that was my father's and took his desk into my study, meaning to use it as my own. In one of the compartments was the letter I have mentioned—it was brown with age, the paper discoloured. I am glad the seal was unbroken. I can't be very proud of my parents' doings about that time; but, mother, I don't think I could forgive you till my dying day if I knew you had read that letter, and disregarded its piteous appeal!"

Lady Decima smiled.

"Was she in such distress?"

"I can repeat her letter by heart. It was so short, so terribly sad:—

"Father, forgive me! I may have sinned, but I have been sorely punished. Oh! write one line if you cannot come to me. Just say I may come back to you, for my misery is greater than I can bear,—Your sorrowing child,

'MAGDALENE CLIFFORD.'

"She must have been ill when she wrote that," said Lady Decima, with whom, as with many other people, the wish was often father to the thought. "I daresay she died, poor thing; and you will find that she has been worrying yourself for nothing all these years."

"If she had been ill would she have offered to come to him? Had she been ill would she have contemplated a lonely journey from London to Chepatow? Besides, poor creature, do you suppose she would have written 'her misery was greater than she could bear,' if there had been the hope of death coming to end her woes?"

"Well, I give up all hope of persuading you You will go your own way!"

"I certainly shall!"

"And if I die of loneliness and neglect you won't care, so that you succeed in your Utopian schemes!"

"I don't think, mother, your suggestion is at all a possible contingency. You have been without my company for years together before!"

"I had society then!"

"You can have society now!"

"But this affair at Merton Park has cast quite a gloom over the neighbourhood. It was a nine days' wonder. Now people can only regret the dullness caused by having the pleasantest house in the county shut up!"

"Which house?"

"Merton Park!"

"Is it shut up?"

"My dear Guy, I forgot you had been away so long! Perhaps you have never heard all that went on! First, that Miss Charteris you brought here eloped with Mrs. Merton's brother. But he must have repented, for just two days later I read in the paper that she had married that very Reginald Denzil you used to think so badly of!"

Sir Guy bit his lip till the blood almost came, but he gave no other sign of impatience, and Lady Decima went on.

"Then the Major found he had business abroad, and rushed off no one quite knows where; and as of course his poor little wife could not be buried alive in the country without him, he had taken a pretty bijou villa in Mayfair, and the Park is shut up entirely!"

"His poor little wife! Good heavens, mother! Don't you know the woman's true character even yet?"

"I know you never liked her, but—"

"I simply loathe her! Listen I and call her 'poor' afterwards if you like. She was engaged to Denzil, and whatever heart either of them had was in the affair. Married, they might have had a chance of respectability. Well, she jilted him and married the Major. He went downhill pretty fast; and at last when every decent house was closed against him, she introduced him as her brother, and brought him here as her husband's guest!"

"Guy, do you mean that the Reginald Travers I knew was—"

"Reginald Denzil, one of the greatest scoundrels unbung! Well, they threw him in the way of Miss Charteris. I suppose Mrs. Merton knew her husband would make inquiries if he were consulted, so there was an elopement!"

"But you said Captain Denzil cared for Mrs. Merton!"

"As much as he would care for anyone."

Guy sighed.

"She was rich and he was poor. Then, poor child, she was quite artless, and had not a suspicion of the truth. Denzil was a very handsome fellow, and I daresay, believing him to be Mr. Travers, she fancied herself in love with him."

Lady Decima felt one honest pang of pity; then she remembered all that hung upon Neil's net, crossing her son's path, and could even

rejoice at the girl's misery if it kept her away from Gay.

"Where are they now?" asked Guy, tersely. "As the country is so fond of gossip, no doubt you have heard."

It was before Nell had become the heiress of the Charteris, and very little had been rumoured about her.

"People say they are in London. Did Lord Charteris never mention his grand-child?"

"Never."

"I suppose they will never acknowledge Mrs. Denzil as a relation."

"The old lord knew Nell. His son, Dr. Charteris, one of the best men I ever met, seems to take a great interest in her. It is a beautiful place, mother—the Hall I mean; and I never met a family who made one feel so thoroughly at home. As for Miss Charteris, it did one good only to look at her."

"She was so pretty!"

"She was so true. I think she and Miss Travers (Mrs. Morton's sister, who was travelling with me at the time of the accident) are two of the truest women I have ever met."

Lady Decimus brightened.

"It is the very first time, Guy, I ever heard you express interest in young ladies. Which of the two did you like best?"

"Oh, mother!" and Guy smiled, in spite of his load of care, "what a match-maker you are! Miss Charteris will never marry anyone; she is a sister of mercy—a family prop; and Lena Travers and Nell Charteris fell in love at first sight, or I am much mistaken."

Sir Gay kept his word. He made no attempt to leave the Grange till Easter had come and gone, Lord Charteris was dead long ago by this time, and it was common property that Helen Denzil was his heiress. Nell, who had kept up a desultory correspondence with Sir Gay, wrote to announce his own engagement and the future plans of his family. Guy wrote back to ask if the Denzils would take up their abode at the Hall, and received a note from Miss, saying that nothing was known of their plans. Her father and Nell had had one business interview with Mrs. Denzil; she was then in Devonshire, but she gave them not the slightest hint whether she intended to remain there.

"Mother," said Sir Gay, one bright May-day, "the time has come. I start this morning on what you term my wild goose-chase. Nothing can change my purpose. Won't you let me have your good wishes to carry with me?"

"To-day! Surely you will not leave me without any warning!"

"You had the warning months ago, mother. I told you after Easter."

"There is nothing ready."

"My portmanteau is packed. I require very little luggage, it would only be in my way; and as my movements are so uncertain, I have taken rooms in Cecil Street. The Strand is very central, and I can vacate them at a week's notice if my search takes me out of town."

"I think you are mad."

"You have told me that before, mother. You know I come of an obstinate race, whose word is their bond, who never swerve from a purpose they have undertaken. I shall never see the Grange again until I have solved the mystery of my cousin's fate. It may be years before we meet again. Are we to part in anger, mother?"

She softened at that. For one moment she longed to tell him all she knew. It was in her power to make his search more child's play, to place in his hands the knowledge he most desired; and for one moment she almost yielded to the impulse to do this. Then she remembered all he would lose, and was firm again in her purpose.

"Good-bye, mother; and remember, if I am ill I shall expect you to come rushing up to town and to take up your quarters with me. Don't look so sad because we differ on one point. We need not quarrel, you know!"

"I feel as if I were losing you for ever!" cibbed the Lady Decimus.

"Nonsense! Come, cheer up, and promise to write me all the news."

He kissed her once more, then he passed out to the waiting carriage. He never said so, but

Lady Decimus knew perfectly that it was probably the last time he ever entered that carriage as his own. Guy Vernon was not a man to do things by halves. If he discovered Magdalen or any child of hers he would give up all that had come to him from his father—all, every job and titillie.

As for Gay, he was in better spirits than he had been for months. Instead of folding his hands passively, and giving himself up to the grief eating into his heart, he would now be up and doing. He had taken the first step in the righting of the wrong, which, though none of his doing, had yet caused him such intolerable remorse, and that in itself was comfort.

He had taken the rooms in Cecil Street by letter, but he knew them well, having often visited a friend who had occupied them; his own income was, as his mother had said, four hundred, and he made no small addition to it by means of the paper at whose office Lena had met him.

So there seemed no desperate need for economy, but Guy foresaw the search for his cousin might entail considerable expense, and therefore made up his mind to be careful. He would live as a gentleman, he would accept occasional invitations from old friends, frequent his club, and go sometimes to the play.

But as to plunging into all the gaieties of the season, as to giving champagne lunches and after opera suppers, it never entered his head. He was no anchorman, he had no wish to keep aloof from his friends. So that their society did not rob him of the time he must devote to his search, and of the hours engaged in literary work, he was quite ready to enjoy it.

He had decided, before he took any other step in the matter, to go straight to the lodgings whence his cousin's pitiful little letter was dated. There was very little hope it would be in the possession of the same people, and still less that they would remember anything of a girl who lodged with them more than twenty years ago; but still there was just the forlorn chance he might obtain some clue, however vague.

The house was in South London, in a district which has changed less than most in the last thirty years—Kennington—having been bricks and mortar when other places were rural. It presents no alteration now, when the fields of Dulwich and Tooting, being transformed into roads and houses, have changed those last spots almost beyond recognition.

As Sir Guy walked down the long, straight road, he felt sure it must have presented much the same appearance when poor Magdalen Clifford wandered down it to post her plaintive appeal. The house, grim but substantial, had probably been as dingy then, and the frequent cards of "apartments to let" showed that Peiton-street had not changed its chief profession in the course of years."

No. 44 was a corner house, and looked a trifle better than the others—that is to say, the paint was a little fresher, and there were some feeble croissants making a weak attempt to poke their heads above ground.

Guy was encouraged by these signs to hope he might at least meet with civility from the occupants, for it is rarely that people who make the most of their home's appearance are quite lost to the little courtesies of life.

He rang the bell with quiescent sentiments. A buxom, motherly-looking woman appeared, she looked at Guy rather inquisitively, but there was nothing rude in her scrutiny.

"What did you please to want, sir?"

"I beg your pardon," and he raised his hat as politely as though she had been a duchess, "but I am very anxious to make some inquiries about a relative of mine who once lived in this house."

"Well, sir, I'm ready to tell you all I can. I came home to this house when I married twenty years ago, and I don't think I've been away from it a month at a time since. You just come in, sir, and let's hear what you want to know."

It seemed to Guy his difficulties were ended; he followed Mrs. Pink into a neat parlour and accepted a seat.

"It is a long time ago—two-and-twenty years."

Mrs. Pink made a rapid calculation and ticked off the date of the year; then she inquired the month.

"June."

"Bless me, sir, then it's easy enough. My husband, he was a rare man for business. He used to keep a big kind of office diary, and every lodger that ever came to us he entered in it—the year they came, and the very day; then their rents paid down every Monday, and, finally, a big red line drawn at the day they went away. Bless you, sir, he's been dead these ten years, and I've followed his way, and every lodger that's ever slept here is down in my books. I was a bit afraid you didn't know the date, and it might be kind of trying to look through many years, seeing Pink he wrote a very small hand, but as you know the month and year, I'll tell you if the party lived here in a jiffy!"

"I am pretty sure she lived here, Mrs. Pink. What I wanted was to know something about her."

"You must have been a mere child at the time, sir?"

"I was," thinking it best to be confidential. "But, Mrs. Pink, there is some property in question which belongs to my relative if she is alive, and reverts to me if she died childless. Unless I can clear up the point I don't know whether I am a rich man or a poor one."

The landlady was delighted at being trusted. She was Guy's faithful assistant from that moment.

"I daresay the name 'll help me to remember, sir, though we've had so many lodgers I'd have forgotten the names of some of 'em without my books."

"I don't think you will have forgotten this one. She was young and very pretty; she would be in great trouble."

Mrs. Pink laid her plump hand on Sir Guy's arm in unconscious familiarity, so great was her interest.

"You must mean Mrs. Clifford, sir. To think of that! All these years I've wondered what became of her, the poor, pretty young creature."

"I do. I am seeking my cousin, Magdalene Vernon, and I have every reason to think she married Douglas Clifford, a young artist, as she left her home in his company, and bore his name."

Mrs. Pink wiped her eyes.

"I can't help it, sir," she said, apologetically. "It's years and years ago, and yet whenever I think of her I must cry!"

"Will you tell me all you know of her?"

"It isn't much, sir. I know Mr. Clifford was a gentleman though certainly his ma and sisters weren't much—the commonest, vulgarist women I ever see."

"But what had they to do with my cousin?" asked Guy.

"I'm coming to that, sir. Mr. and Mrs. Clifford came to me in November, and I could see just what they were—gentlefolks down on their luck. I took a fancy to 'em both. He might have been a bad man; but then, when I see his family I made allowances, and certain Mrs. Clifford—I always call her so—was the sweetest young creature I ever saw."

"Please tell me all you can."

"She came in November and took my parlour. He was out teaching all day long, but he never knew how to make enough of her when he came home; he just worshipped her, he did."

"And she?"

"Bless me, sir! She was as happy as she could be; never a single letter came for either of 'em, never a creature called to see 'em. I don't suppose they had much more than two pounds a week to spend when the rent was paid, and yet they were as happy as a king and queen. Only one thing struck me—he'd never let her go out alone, and he gave me the most positive orders no one was ever to see her while he was out. It puzzled me at the time, but I understood it soon enough."

Which was more than Sir Guy did; every

moment he was getting more hopelessly bewildered.

"In the spring," went on Mrs. Pink, equably, "there came a baby. I suppose it couldn't help it, poor lamb, but it brought only misery with it. First it died, then its funeral and the doctor and that all came to so much money they got into debt, and it seemed as if from that moment bad luck set in."

"I suppose Mr. Clifford tired of her?"

"That he didn't, sir. He loved her better, not less; but he caught cold in the east wind and was laid up with rheumatic fever. Then she sold everything, bit by bit, to get him food and medicine. I'd have helped her gladly, sir, for my husband was well-to-do, and we'd not have missed it, but all she'd ever take of me was letting of the rent run on. 'When I've nothing left, rather than let him starve I'll borrow of you,' she said. Well, one day I made bold and asked her hadn't they no relations? She said, yes, and she'd written to her pa over and over again, but he never came. Then I asked her about Mr. Clifford's family, but she just shook her head and said she knew nothing.

"At last, when she'd sold pretty well all she had, she thought she'd better pawn his ring than let him starve; and somehow, there was a difficulty, and so she sold it outright to a cousin of mine, who's in a jeweller's in Bond-street. And it was that ring that caused the mischief.

"It seems his ma, Mrs. Lumden—for she'd been married since, and Mr. Clifford was the only child of her first husband—saw the ring in the shop-window, and then she went in and cross-questioned them till she found out where it came from. Then she rushed down here with two daughters as tragic and stuck-up as herself, and another woman, who makes my blood boil now when I think of her—a red-nosed virago, with cork-screw ringlets, and a look about her as though she drank—I expect she did!"

"Well!" asked Guy, when she stopped to take breath. "Mrs. Pink, do go on."

"I wasn't well, sir, and you're not to think ill of your poor young cousin, for the fault was none of hers; and the moment I set eyes on that red-nosed woman I forgave Mr. Clifford everything."

"But I don't understand—"

"It's simple enough, sir. That hateful mother had married that poor young man when he was a mere lad to her ugly niece because she was an heiress. They led a cat-and-dog life; and, finally, he was so tired of her throwing her money in his teeth he left her. He had been bred to no trade, and he just took to drawing. He met your cousin somewhere down in the country and married her.

"I'm not saying it was right, sir, but he saw there was no one to care for her in her home, and he loved her so, he thought he could make her happy. He worked hard for her, I will say; and if her marriage lines had been worth all they seemed he couldn't have made more of her. My husband said I was a wicked woman to say such a thing; but, to my mind, sir, it was my Mr. Clifford who seemed that poor young man's true wife—not the woman who had made his life so wretched; he was glad to get away from her at any price."

"And I suppose he left her?"

"He did, sir, but not in the way you think. The shock killed him. The doctor said he'd heart-disease; anyway, he died when he saw his wife—his legal wife. I mean, he never had the pain of seeing Mrs. Clifford's face when she learned how he had deceived her."

"Died?"

"Ay! They took him away and gave him a grand funeral, very different from the best he could afford for his little lad. Then Mrs. Clifford (I must call her that, sir), she was ill for weeks, and then she wrote once more to her father and no answer came!"

"Poor girl!"

"Ay! I'd easily have kept her, but my husband was a harsh man. He'd not have minded her poverty, but he wouldn't see the difference between her who had been so cruelly deceived and those foolish girls who go wrong knowingly."

He couldn't bear to see me with her, and so just a week after she had written to her father she went!"

"But surely she said good-bye?"

"She didn't, sir! I fancy she knew it'd be too painful for us both. She took nothing that belonged to her. She just slipped out one June evening in the gloaming, and—I've never seen her since!"

"She must be dead! Driven wild by suffering she must have killed herself!"

"I thought that, sir, myself for many a long day; but I know better now."

"Do you mean you have heard from her?"

"Just that, sir! Nearly two years after she went away there came a gentleman here and asked for me, sir. I can't tell you how he began, but before I understood he was shaking hands with me, and thanking me with the tears in his eyes, and then he told me he had married Mrs. Clifford and was going to take her far away from all who had been unkind to her. She had wanted to come with him, but he thought she was not strong enough. He brought me the loveliest clock you ever saw from her, and just a picture of her dear face, and he gave me a bank-note from himself, and would insist on my taking it, though I told him five pounds would pay all I had spent on Mrs. Clifford—let alone fifty!"

"And he did not tell you his name?"

"He didn't, sir! He promised me if ever they came back to England he would bring his wife to see me. Time would have made her stronger then, and softened the old wounds. And then, as he was going, he turned round once more and said however long he lived he should never forget what I'd done for his wife (it was little enough, I'm sure), and that if Heaven ever sent him a little girl she should be called after me!"

Mrs. Pink paused; the tears were running down her cheeks from old memories.

Guy thanked her warmly. His worst fears were laid to rest now. Magdalene had not been driven by despair to the sin of suicide, and for at least twenty years she had been safe and happy in a good man's home.

But how in the world was he to find her? All he knew she had gone abroad some twenty years before; to what country, to what continent even he did not know. Nay, more—Mrs. Pink could not tell him her husband's name!

(To be continued.)

MR. TEMPLETON'S DAUGHTER.

—:—

(Continued from page 201.)

Then there came a time when she did get out, and got drunk as well, and lost the packets, or fancied she did, and for a long time it remained in the house of a friend, whom she had gone to visit, who was as ignorant and as afraid of consequences as she was herself. She recovered it on her next holiday, which was after a long interval, and then she summoned up courage to ask a question or two about Mr. Templeton and where he was to be found.

It was after the parliamentary session, and she was assured that the gentleman in question would be sure to be out of England, and she put the packet away in her box and forgot all about it.

The master promised to forward it to him, and the old woman died and was buried like the tramp she had laid out.

"What alls you to-day, Power; you look quite radiant!"

Thus, Mr. Templeton to his young secretary—not quite such a boy as when he entered his service, and a sunny-looking young fellow, with his life before him still.

"I did not know I did, sir; it is the bright weather perhaps," was the reply, though a hot flush rose to the handsome young face as the answer was given.

"You look as if your world was all sunshine."

"I think it is."

"Ah! with the sunshine of a woman's face. Take care, my boy, I should not like to see your life spoiled, and I have fancied the spoiling was coming. That portrait you hid the other morning."

"I really did not know I had it about me," the young man said, with a little laugh and a deeper blush, "till—"

"Till you took it out of your pocket and kissed it! All I say is take care. Who is the lady; may I ask so much?"

"Surely, Mr. Templeton, you may ask me anything you will, and I will answer."

"Who is she, then, and where did you meet her?"

"In Scotland, where you sent me last season; she lives at Melrose."

"And her friends?"

"She has none—no relations that is—she is an orphan."

"And you want to marry her straight out of hand, and set up housekeeping on nothing; is that it?"

"Not quite, but we do want to get married as soon as possible; there is no one to interfere on either side. I have no friends except you, sir, and she has none."

"And her name is—"

"Clare Brandon; this is her portrait, sir. I have been going to tell you this more than once, but I did not like to intrude my affairs on you."

"You might have trusted me. I should always advise you to the best of my ability for your father's sake if not for your own. He and I were boys together, and fast friends till chance separated us. So this is the lady. Why! who is she? Where did you get this?"

"Clare gave it to me, sir. It is a faithful likeness."

"She has a look of—pshaw! what nonsense! How oddly thoughts fly back sometimes. That young lady's face sent me back to a time when—well, when I was fool enough to think that a woman could be true and a man happy. Who is she like?"

"She is like you, sir."

Mr. Templeton laughed now, though there was a wonderful similarity between the fresh sweet face of the beautiful girl and his own set and serious features.

"I am flattered," he said. "The young lady is singularly handsome. We will discuss this matter another day, Power; I am in a hurry this morning. Where are the letters?"

"These from the house, sir, these from the club," the young secretary replied, laying two bundles on the table in front of his chief, who proceeded to open them as they came under his hand.

When he was about half through them he uttered a loud exclamation! A business-like blue envelope being opened, had revealed an extremely dirty and ancient-looking parcel and a letter. Clarence Power looked up to see Mr. Templeton very pale, and evidently agitated.

"I must go northward at once," he said, "by to-night's mail. You must attend to—and he gave a rapid list of matters which he wished his secretary to see.

All through the day he was abstracted and unlike himself, and Clarence Power helping him to arrange his work devoutly wished that he might go northward too.

Travelling on Mr. Templeton's business he had fallen in with Mr. Gosforth and his sister, who had also known his parents, Miss Gosforth having been a schoolfellow of his mother's.

At their house he had met Clare Brandon, who had been with them ever since the break-up at Monk's Ford, more like a loved and loving daughter than an adopted wifel whom no one knew anything about.

Miss Gosforth had had a long and tedious illness, and declared that her life had been saved by the care and attention of her protégé.

Mr. Gosforth pronounced her invaluable in all ways in which a girl can make herself useful, and they had been only too glad to keep her instead of letting her go elsewhere as they at first proposed.

"There will be no need to seek any situation for her," Miss Gosforth said, when it had become

all too evident that Clarence Power had lost his heart. "She might do worse, poor child."

"He might do a great deal worse," Mr. Gosforth replied. "I suppose he will speak to Mr. Templeton about it. I hope he will not feel prejudiced against her when he hears who she really is; he must have been very much annoyed over that miserable affair."

"I should think he has forgotten all about it by this time," his sister said; "great men have to put up with all sorts of swindles of that sort."

"It is odd that nothing has ever come to light about it," the clergyman said. "I suppose nothing ever will now."

It was not a little bewildering to the good brother and sister, not many months after this, to be summoned to their pretty little drawing-room to see a gentleman and to be greeted by a tall man in a travelling wrap, who announced himself as Mr. Templeton, and asked almost breathlessly if Miss Clare Brandon lived with them still!

"Yes," Miss Gosforth said, "should she call her?" but Mr. Templeton begged the favour of a few words first. He wanted to make sure that she was the same young lady who had been at the school of the Misses Chandos, who had been palmed off on them as his daughter. She was, Miss Gosforth said; she had been a member of their household ever since. And had she the mark of a burn on her arm? A scar of some sort, he was told, and a certain locket in her possession with two portraits in it.

"My brother has it," Miss Gosforth replied; "he thought he had better keep it for her in case it might lead to her identification sometime; she has no idea who she is, poor child."

"She is my daughter, Miss Gosforth, really mine."

Miss Gosforth looked at her brother and then at the door; she was half inclined to run out of the room, firmly believing that their visitor was a little mad.

"I am in my right senses, I assure you," he said with a smile, divining her thought. "At least, I hope so. It is a curious story, but it is true." He told it to them as they sat there listening with a curious feeling that it was all a dream. The man who had swindled Miss Chandos was his brother, one who had been a drag and disgrace to him all through their career. When they were mere boys the younger had well-nigh broken their father's heart by his conduct, and had finally run away from home to reappear when his brother had climbed to power and greatness, and be his evil genius at every turn. Even in his luckless marriage he had come between him and the wife he had so unhappily chosen. He had declared that the vain, frivolous woman had been his love first and had been tempted away from him by his brother's superior wealth and position. Whether this was true or not the older had no means of knowing, but the younger conceived a scheme of what he called revenge, which he carried out with diabolical ingenuity for some time. His object was to get possession of the child, making her father believe her dead, and then bring her up in all the evil he could think of, and make her a complete disgrace to everyone belonging to her; then her father might have her back with such convincing proofs of her identity as could not be refuted and make what he could of her.

All this was set forth in the paper that he left behind him, when his brother saw him only in death. How he had come to alter his mind and let his scheme fall through no one would ever know now. There was proof enough that he had succeeded in abstracting the child and substituting another; the persons who had aided him were still alive and to be found, and Clare herself could tell a good deal.

Mr. Templeton took Clare's hands when Miss Gosforth at length fetched her down, and looked long and earnestly into her face. Then he lifted her sleeve and looked at the scar on her arm; he knew exactly where to find it.

"This is my work!" he said.

"Yours!" ejaculated Miss Gosforth and she smiled sadly.

"Yes," he replied. "I was teasing her up in

the courtyard of our house at Florence, and there was some plumbing work going on, at which I had been looking. One of the men running by with a red-hot iron tripped against me, and somehow, we never knew how, the little one's arm came right against the instrument and was burnt from the wrist to the elbow."

The locket was one Mr. Templeton had given to his wife, and she had put it round her child's neck in some superstitious freak that he well remembered; the portrait in it was that of Clare's mother.

"I suppose a Providence has watched over her," the father said, after the emotion of the strange reunion had been a little got over, "and prevented my wretched brother from fulfilling his terrible purpose; from all I can gather he meant me to have found my child, when he chose that I should find her, amongst the most degraded of her sex. What part of his plan bringing her here to Scotland could have been, I cannot imagine."

The plan had been to rid himself of her altogether had they but known it. Something had suggested itself to him and his companions in crime, that promised a magnificent haul, and Clare was an encumbrance. The notes in his possession had to be got rid of somehow, and they offered a way of getting rid of the child as well. The fact of his having been accidentally addressed as his brother helped on the idea that he so successfully carried out.

What became of him during the time that everyone seemed to have lost sight of him is of no consequence to our story.

When Mr. Templeton returned to his solitary London home he electrified his housekeeper by ordering a room to be prepared for his daughter, who would presently reside with him, but who was coming on a short visit at present with a lady friend.

"And be good enough not to mention the fact to Mr. Power," he added, leaving the good lady in a state of perturbation better imagined than described; it rather scared her to have daughters suddenly dropping from the clouds as it were, when she had had no previous idea of their existence.

"I want you at my house this evening, Power," Mr. Templeton said to his secretary some days after his return from the north. "I won't ask you to dinner, for the business I want you about might spoil your appetite, but look in in the evening, will you?"

"Certainly, sir," the young man replied, rather disappointed, for he had promised himself a treat at the theatre, and this appointment would interfere with it.

Mr. Templeton seldom wanted anything out of hours, but there were times when he did, and it appeared as if this were one of them. He dressed, thinking perhaps he might get part of the evening after all, and looked every inch a gentleman, when to his surprise he was shown upstairs into the seldom-used drawing-room.

"The ladies are in the boudoir, I think," the servant who showed him in said. "Mr. Templeton will be here in a minute."

Ladies! what ladies, he had never seen any in that house, and he was beginning to fancy that he must be dreaming, when two figures that he knew quite well appeared in the doorway, and he gave himself a little pinch, for one of them was Clare Brandon and the other Miss Gosforth. And there was Mr. Templeton standing beside them, ah, he must be dreaming, for he drew Clare gently forward, and said, quietly.—

"I think you know my daughter, Mr. Power!"

"No, it isn't a dream, my boy!" the great man said, when the astonished greetings had come to an end. "Facts are stranger than fiction, and I have found my child."

The world said that it was hardly the match that Mr. Templeton's daughter ought to have made, if indeed she was his daughter, and the story that got about was not all a wild romance.

Edible young men, with scantily-filled purses, declared that such a prize in the matrimonial lottery ought to have been exhibited, and not disposed of in that quiet way, and spiteful people turned up their noses and opined that there was

something wrong, or the popular member's daughter would have been seen and heard of before this.

It was nobody's business, and when Miss Templeton was presented by the most exclusive and savagely proper duchess about the court, society was satisfied, and when the wedding came about there was quite a flutter amongst the pretty girls in the same set, as to who would be chosen for bridesmaids.

There was considerable wondering as to who the Rev. Charles Gosforth might be, who had been brought from no one knew where, to perform the ceremony, and no one knew the lady-like elderly woman, who seemed almost like the bride's mother, but it was nobody's business, and it served as a subject for gossip, if it did nothing else.

Clarence Power is in Parliament himself now, a clever rising man, though there are plenty of uncomfortable folks who will not give him any credit for talent, but say that he owes it all to the fact of his being the husband of MR. TEMPLETON'S DAUGHTER.

[THE END.]

GIVE HIM BACK TO ME.

—TO—

CHAPTER II.—(continued.)

VIOLET took the letter, and sat with it in her shaking fingers, not daring to open it till the servant was out of the room.

Then she tore the envelope impalatively, and read. There was no beginning—no "Dearest Violet" or "Darling Wife," or any of the endearing epithets in which young husbands are supposed to indulge. Mr. Sartoris plunged into his subject at once.

"After what I have discovered it would be ridiculous to ask you to live with me. I cannot set you free, but I will make you as free as I can. You are so young that I suppose you will go straight back to your mother, who will tell you what is best for you. I fancy Fardon Court had better be shut up for the present, but the little place in Kent shall be prepared for you at once, and your sister will probably live there with you. My bankers are Messrs. Gordon and Gregson, Lombard-street, and I will tell them to send you a cheque-book. Spend what you like, only don't go beyond two thousand a year. My man of business, you know, is Charles Winterton, Lincoln's Inn. He will arrange everything for you, and you must apply to him in any difficulty. Throw the blame of this mess upon me. A man can stand that sort of thing, but a girl must be careful. For your own sake, until I am dead and out of the reckoning, don't see too much of C. L."

"Yours faithfully,

"JOHN DALRYMPLE SARTORIS."

Violet sat for some time, as if she were stunned. Her husband had gone from her for ever—his letter clearly meant that their divided lives were never to meet again. Happiness was over. Her secure position as a married woman had gone from her—everything seemed sliding away. Was it a nightmare!—pressing her feverish hands to her throbbing temples—a horrid delusion! Jack couldn't have gone. Why, only a few hours ago his arms had been round her—his passionate kisses on her lips, his honest eyes glowing with love. And now—now he cast her off for a ridiculous trifle, and disappeared, never even telling her where he was going, or what shape his future life would take. It was past belief. Not a soul would credit it. Everybody would take it for granted that there was something shameful in the background; and she, who had always carried her head as proudly as an imperial lily, would have the finger of scorn pointed at her, and the gossips at the clubs would tell good stories about Sartoris and his wife.

Go back to her home, as her husband suggested! No, that she wouldn't! To hide herself somewhere in a corner till her wedding and everything

about it was forgotten, that was her only conscious wish. Where could she go?

A bright idea flashed through her mind. There was her aunt, Lady Stapleton, living at Millefleurs, about twenty miles from Havre. She had often invited her niece to stay with her, and begged her not to stand on ceremony, but to come whenever she felt inclined.

It was too late to telegraph to-night, but a telegram should be sent as soon as it was possible the next morning. She would tell her aunt to send the answer to Calais, as she was in a fever to get out of Dover before she should come across any acquaintances, and be tortured by eager questions. A roll of bank-notes had fallen out of her husband's letter. They must be sent back to him at once. She would not touch them. She had not sunk so low as to use his money when he had cast her off.

All the anger in her heart broke out afresh. He had insulted and deserted her. And after that she would not touch a penny of his money. By her settlement she was entitled to seven hundred a-year. That she would use, but no more. His two thousand he might keep to himself.

She opened her travelling bag, and got out a sheet of paper and an envelope, and wrote impulsively, when, for all she knew, this one letter might make or mar the happiness of her life. She ought to have thought over it for hours instead of dashing it off in five minutes; but she was very young, and not accustomed to weigh either her words or her actions. Like Mr. Sartoris she began without any endearing epithet:

"When I am without another friend in the world I may go back to Richmond-Terrace, to be a nine days' wonder to my acquaintances. At present I prefer going to Millefleurs, where I believe my aunt will be willing to welcome me. I return the notes, as nothing would induce me to use them. I have fifty pounds which my father gave me when I started. So I shall not starve. I haven't a doubt that you will indulge your passion for travelling, and enjoy it thoroughly without an encumbrance, though you have told me none of your plans.—Yours truly,
"VIOLET."

And then she stopped, whilst the tears ran in a flood down her cheeks. It was her first letter since her marriage, yet she would not sign it with her new name. With an effort she controlled herself, and thrusting the bank-notes in with the letter, gave the packet to Susan to take to "The Griffin." Susan suggested that it was late, but her mistress told her she must take it, whether late or early.

CHAPTER III. THAT OLD FRIEND!

JACK DALRYMPLE SARTORIS was about as miserable as a man could be, as he leant over the side of the steamer with folded arms, looking down into the waves, as they danced in the autumn sunshine. He could scarcely credit it now. The one girl in the world whom he had believed to be perfectly true and honest, was it possible that she had been acting a part day after day, returning his caresses with her own sweat lips, whilst in the depths of her heart she was cherishing an affection for another! Could anything be more monstrous than carrying that other man's photograph close to her heart on her wedding-day! Perhaps she might have gone on fooling him to the last, if he had not happened to ask that innocent question about her watch. In his pocket he had found the anonymous letter, which he had meant to throw into the fire, and his jealousy had fed upon it like a flame on a heap of dry wood.

Of course he must have been blind all along—blinder than any bat. He had been as innocent as a boy of sixteen, and taken Cyril Landon for a harmless friend of the family. They all called him by his Christian name, so he had said nothing against Violet's doing the same; although

every time she said "Cyril," it jarred upon him as an unnecessary familiarity. Now he loathed the thought of having kissed her, when she was thinking of Landon all the time, and no doubt watching the door in hopes that he would interrupt a tedious tête à tête.

She was lost to him for ever. It was not a case for forgiveness; she loved someone else; therefore she could not love him, and no amount of scolding would win that love from Landon to himself.

It was a fiasco, for which there was no remedy as long as they both should live. If one should die, the other would be free. The chances were that he would die the first. There would be nothing now to keep him back from being as reckless as he pleased; and a reckless sportsman generally has a short life, if a merry one whilst it lasts.

How many had met their deaths through a loaded gun carried carelessly in the excitement of sport, or the slipping of a foot on the steep sides of a hill! And then a corpse lay quiet amongst the heather, with white face turned to the skies, a useless gun lying on the grass. A pointer watched in the silence with drooping ears. And far away in some English home the tidings would travel on sable wings, and the cry of bitter weeping would take the place of joyous laughter, and more than one life would be darkened, like the shuttered rooms of the old house, where the sportsman had played when a boy—and so much the better for the man. He was dead and out of the way of treacheries and deceptions.

No woman could fool him again. Though his life was strong within him, his health perfect, his fortune secure, Jack Sartoris felt as if he should like to change places with any coiffed stranger; like to be buried, and out of "the frost and the fame," because one little girl happened to be his wife. And yet if he had found himself in the sea he certainly would have tried to struggle out of it. If the ship he was on had caught fire, he would certainly have hoped to get into a boat; and if he had seen the muzzle of a gun pointed at him, he would certainly have turned it aside if he could. And yet he was honest in thinking he would like to die, in order to free his wife from a hateful chain. Oh, he deceived himself, as we all do at times.

Later in the day he was one unit, whilst his wife was another. In a crowd of tourists waiting to be admitted to the platform of a station belonging to the Coast Railway, Violet Sartoris, after waiting a little while at an hotel, received a telegram from her aunt, saying that she would be delighted to welcome her, and would send an old friend to meet her.

She knew that her husband had been on board the boat, though she remained below and he kept out of sight, but she did not know that he had made it a point of honour to see her safely lodged under her aunt's roof before he returned to London to make his arrangements for the future.

She was frightened at the attentions of a fat Frenchman, who had apparently taken too much. He kept assuring her that he would take care of her, murmuring vulgar compliments under his breath in a way that disgusted her beyond measure.

The faithful Susan was separated from her hopelessly, in spite of frantic efforts to get nearer to her mistress, and the fat man's garlic-scented breath was in her face, whilst another man's infamous cigar was nearly choking her. She gave a little gasp, and in a moment the Frenchman's arm was thrown round her protectingly, to her great disgust. "Madame ill?" he asked, whilst she struggled wildly to set herself free, but he said no more, for a hand was laid on his collar, and gasping for breath he was hurled back upon the crowd, whilst a broad-shouldered Englishman stood with glaring eyes between him and the pretty girl whose attractions had excited his brain.

With a volley of oaths and clenched fists he was advancing towards them, when the doors were thrown open, and they passed through on to the platform. He was about to follow, when he was summarily told to halt, as there was something wrong with his ticket. Whilst he was

fretting and fuming, the strangely assort'd pair walked on together.

If Jack Sartoris would have given but one look into Violet's face the quarrel might have ended then and there; but with lips closely set, and chin high in the air, he strode on, whilst she followed, her knees knocking together, her lips trembling, her cheeks white as a swan's wing. Arrived at the door of an empty compartment, he saw her into it, closed the door, raised his hat, and walked off, whilst the cry with which she would have detained him flew on her lips. Thanks to Sartoris's injunctions and liberal tip, no one was allowed to disturb her, and she was left alone with her miserable thoughts in proud isolation.

The mere sight of his handsome face had brought back all her painful longings for a reconciliation, that she might feel that sweetness of his affection, and trust herself completely to his care. In spite of all he had said he must care for her still. Was he not watching over her now, ready and willing to help her whenever she wanted his assistance? Oh, the quarrel was a mere farce.

When they arrived at Millefleurs she would go up to him, and explain everything. She had been too angry to say anything in her own defence and she had let the worst suspicions take root in his mind without an effort to combat them. She sat with clasped hands and wide-open eyes, staring at the flying landscape. Rather a dreary look-out before the picturesque scenery of Normandy was reached, but she saw nothing but a pair of angry blue eyes, and the poplars and the long straight roads, and the uninteresting levels were as if they had no existence.

Meanwhile, in another carriage, not far off, Jack Sartoris was biting the ends of his long moustaches, and chewing the end of bitter recollection. It had cut him to the heart to see his own young wife alone in a vulgar crowd, and a pang had gone through him like the thrust of a dagger, when it flashed through his mind that so it might always be in the future. He was her natural protector, and when he was gone she would have to struggle alone against the world. And then remorse came over him, and he acknowledged that he had been too quick in his denunciation, and a great longing came afterwards to set everything right, and take her back to his throbbing heart. He had left her no time for explanation; he had crushed her, poor little thing, with his fierceness, as he might have crushed a goat with his hand. And then common-sense raised her voice, and told him no amount of explanations could do any good. A girl must love a man whose photograph she kept concealed next her heart, and if she loved Cyril Landon, their married life, if spent together, would be almost like a hell upon earth. He leant his head upon his hands, and thought and thought—tempted to yield to the longing to protect her, held back by the remembrance that she had signed against the commonest code of honour.

He was not prone to vacillation, but the sight at the station had revolted him, and the vulgar Frenchman had been enough to shake his firm resolve. She would be safe from anything of that kind when she got amongst her own people. When they arrived at Millefleurs Lady Stapleton would be there to meet her niece, of course, and some member of her own family would always be told off to look after her, for Lady Mayne, though a woman of fashion, was evidently a careful mother. He need have no uneasiness on that score, and yet he could not help being as uneasy as possible, and tortured by a thousand doubts. Reason as he might, he could not get rid of the fact that he had taken an oath before Heaven to protect her "till death did them part."

In schoolboy parlance, that was "a stumper." If any evil came upon her pretty head through his desertion, the responsibility would be on his own conscience. He could not leave her—he could not remain with her. He stretched out his arms with a groan. Just then the train steamed slowly into the station at Millefleurs, and he jumped up with a sudden quick resolve to take her back and win her love by the magnetic power of his own.

He sprang out of the train when it had barely

stopped, and pushed his way through a knot of passengers who blocked his path. And then, in another moment, the smile died away on his lips, the eager light went from his eyes, and with a curse hissed out between his clenched teeth he turned back, and scrambled into the fast carriage he came to, not caring where he went, so long as he left his wife far enough behind.

A young man, with a pleasant, good-looking face, and a very slight form, clad in a thick sister, bowed, and then held out a pair of eager hands to help Mrs. Sartoris out of her carriage.

Above the bustle and the clacking of Norman tongues around, Cyril Landon's clear English voice rang out with fatal distinctness,—

"So enchanted to get your wife. I assure I'd be the one to meet you. There's a rum sort of dog-cart outside in which I'm to have the honour of driving you. So awfully good of you!"—with a sort of accentuated wonder in his tone—"to give Sartoris the slip for a few hours. You are sure he's not at your elbow?"

And then the train moved on, and no one but Landon himself heard the surprised question after her aunt, from Violet's lips, as her eyes wandered wistfully up and down the platform, and filled with disappointed tears, when she found that Saxon was the only familiar face to be seen in the dim light.

Mr. Landon explained presently that he was staying with Lady Stapleton. The old lady had a cold, and could not turn out, so the pleasure had fallen to him, but Violet did not hear him. She was leaning against the wall, whilst the tears she could not stop were running down her cheeks.

And Jack Sartoris, with every worst suspicion confirmed, was being carried further and further away, the veins on his forehead swollen, his heart almost bursting with rage, his fist clenched. He could not touch a rival so slight, so thin, that he could almost have crumpled him up in his strong right hand, but if curses could now have the power to kill. Cyril Landon—as innocent and harmless a young fellow as ever stepped—would have died that very hour.

CHAPTER IV.

"LADY JANE SAYS—"

"Lost, an Englishman, with the bluest eyes, and the nicest smile in the world."

That was Violet Sartoris's thought for two years, when her loss was new, and her remembrance of her husband's beauty was fresh in her mind.

"Lost, an Englishman, who ought to be taking care of me, and looking after me."

That was her thought for the three next, when she was heartily weary of independence and the everlasting questioning of her friends.

"Lost, a husband, and I must know whether he is alive or dead."

That was her constant thought during the six years, when disappointed love had almost turned into hate; when hope deferred from year to year had made her young heart sick with unavailing longing. Through all these years she had kept absolute silence as to the cause of parting. To her mother and father she confessed that they had had a quarrel in the train about a friend. One day all would be made straight. Meanwhile, she and Jack were better apart.

Mr. Sartoris wrote to Lord Mayne, and told him simply that he and his daughter had agreed to separate. Nobody knew any more than that, and everybody grew tired of fruitless speculations.

Violet remained for a long while at Millefours, and then retired, at her parents' instigation, to "the little place in Kent," which her husband had placed at her disposal. There she lived very quietly on her own five hundred a-year, never going into society, or giving any entertainments at the Priory, comforted every now and then by a visit from some of her own relations, and especially rejoiced by the constant companionship of her one particular friend, Mabel Ingham, who lived close by at the Rectory.

Cyril Landon was the ward of the Rev. Clement Ingaham, and often ran down to Leighton. He was very much distressed at the desolate condition of his old friend, and would have liked to undertake the office of comforter-in-chief; but out of deference to her husband's prejudice, she never invited him to her house, though she could not prevent his coming to see her whenever he was at the Rectory. He often wondered why he was never asked to dine at the Priory, and his curiosity never rested as to the exact position of affairs between the husband and wife. Knowing the Maynes for so many years he told himself that there wasn't a soul of whom Sartoris could possibly be jealous. And it never occurred to him that he himself was the man whom Sartoris regarded as his hated rival.

He was devoted to Violet, and ready to place himself entirely at her service, but his attachment never went beyond the bounds of purest friendship. He was intensely sorry for her; and, out of mere pity for her desolate condition, sent her flowers from Covent Garden, and heather and grouse from Scotland, just to show that there was somebody who thought of her, though her own husband behaved like a brute, and left her at the mercy of the world. He ran down so often to the Rectory, on one plea or another, that nobody was much surprised when he made an offer to Mabel Ingaham.

She was a very pretty-looking girl, with earnest hazel eyes, and soft light hair. Some people said there was the wistful look in her eyes which belonged to those who are not long for this earth; but the girl only laughed, and said of course she looked wistful till she had found her lover.

He was not over strong himself, and was supposed to have a weak chest, so the onlookers thought it was not a brilliant outlook for the two, but they were very happy in their mutual affection and refused to see any clouds in their future.

"What is the matter, little one? You look as grave as if you had just started for a funeral!" asked Cyril Landon one day, as he was standing under a willow tree in a corner of the Rectory garden, holding a basket which Mabel was filling with flowers.

"Oh, nothing!" she answered hastily, whilst a rich colour flooded her cheeks, and she bent her head low over the basket.

"Tell me this moment," as he put his hand under her soft white chin, and raised her blushing face so that he could study it at his ease.

"You will be angry with me."

"I couldn't if I tried. Out with it!"

"You've been so good to Violet," growing confused.

"Not half as good as she deserves," warmly. "If I had had my will, I should have done twice as much."

"I think you've done quite enough," in a low voice.

He gave a whistle, and opened his eyes to their fullest extent. "Jealous! by all that is absurd."

"Not a bit," as severely as she could, for her nature was gentle as a dove's. "Only it struck me to-day that you must have liked her awfully, or you wouldn't have given her so many flowers."

"I do like her awfully; but, you little dog in the manger, why do you grudge her my worthless friendship when you've taken all the other things for yourself?"

A deep sigh, an anxious look, as she pulled the thorns off a rose. "She is so very lovely!"

"Good-looking and high-bred down to the ground—but what has that to do with it?"

No answer, except another sigh, which seemed to come from her high-heeled shoes.

"Look here, May," and the laughter went out of his eyes, whilst his voice grew almost stern. "Violet is Sartoris's wife. I've never forgotten that fact, although he has. It was unworthy of you to fear that I should think of her except as a dear old friend."

"Oh Cyril, don't! I didn't mean it. It was all that horrid Lady Jane," and the tears ran down the soft cheeks.

Instantly his arm was thrown round her with protecting tenderness, but his voice was very grave.

"Lady Jane! What on earth had she to do with it?"

"Oh, she hinted all sorts of things," with her face hidden on his coat sleeves.

"What sort of things? I must know."

"That—that you always flirted with Violet before her marriage."

"It's a lie," energetically; "and I shall take the first opportunity of telling her so. What else?"

"She said it was very odd how you met her on her honeymoon, and she had always understood that that was the reason why Mr. Sartoris went off!"

"Good heavens! I never heard such a base invention. The poor little thing came to her aunt's for a refuge, and I happened to be there by the merest accident, having just escorted the old lady back after the wedding. I shall never forget my astonishment. We had scarcely time to turn round before the bride was upon us, and what had become of her husband I couldn't imagine."

"Then you had nothing to do with it, really!" looking up into his face with earnest eyes, so pure, so angelic in their expression, that a scoundrel's must have fallen before them.

"Mabel, how can you!" in almost fierce reprobation, as he slowly withdrew his arm.

She clung to it penitently, her slight frame quivering with agitation.

"I beg your pardon! Of course, I believe you; I only wanted you to say it again. Oh, Cyril, don't be angry!"

He stooped and smoothed her hair.

"Then don't doubt me. Listen, dear! You are the only woman I ever loved, so help me Heaven! Will that content you?"

"Yes, yes!" and the sweet face rested so temptingly on his shoulder that he kissed it passionately.

There was a long pause, whilst the birds sang and the bees hummed their courtship to the roses, and two hearts beat in perfect unison with each other. The small cloud had passed away, and there was nothing between them now.

Presently Mabel sighed once again.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Cyril, tenderly.

"Of poor Mrs. Sartoris. Oh! if you behaved like that to me," clasping her hands, "it would break my heart! I couldn't bear it as well as she does."

"I think her heart is breaking slowly," he said thoughtfully. "It is years since I have heard her laugh, and it used to be the most joyous sound on earth."

"Why doesn't somebody go after him, and bring him back? Bartie Mayne, for instance."

"I think Bartie would be more disposed to kick him to the other end of the earth. He is mad with him for spoiling his sister's life."

"Quite right too. If I were Mrs. Sartoris I wouldn't have him back at any price."

"Yes you would; you would jump into his arms. Oh, when those two meet! I should like to be behind a curtain and peep; it would be something striking in modern melodrama."

"You don't mean to say she cares for him still?" in surprise.

"With her whole heart and soul. Does she care to look at any other man?"

"She never sees anyone but you or her brother."

"True; but she will soon. Lady Stapleton is coming over, and she has made her promise to stay with her at Holly Bank. There she will see heaps of people, and her wretched life will be brightened."

"Fancy if she lost her heart to somebody!"

"You improper little thing! Violet has enough pride for all of us, and she will never stoop to anything so low as a flirtation."

"Lady Jane says—"

"Hang Lady Jane!" with more warmth than was necessary. "I don't mean literally," he

added, with a laugh ; "but a venomous woman is the most detestable animal in creation. Some women are so near the angels, and others are not far off from fiends. You, little one," with his hand upon her hair, "have always seemed more of an angel than a common human being."

A few days later Cyril Landon and Mabel Ingham were married in Leighton church; and some fashionable people, mostly relatives of the bridegroom, came all the way down from London to see the ceremony performed. His cousin, Lady Jane and the Hon. Ralph Armitage, were among the number, the latter performing the part of best man, and all the time wishing that he could add a certain lady in a bewitching costume of palest grey to the number of the bridesmaids. The lady was Mrs. Sartoris, dragged out of her retirement by the prayers and entreaties of her dearest friend—the bride.

She had come much against her will; and after her long seclusion she felt quite bewildered by the greetings on every side from people who seemed to have passed out of her life. One of these was Lady Jane, who pounced upon her with the utmost eagerness, as if she had been a gold-digger, and had just discovered a streak of real ore.

After shaking both her hands she introduced her brother, who shot one of his bold glances at the proud, sweet face, then bowed low with the deference he could always assume. "Mrs. Sartoris has forgotten me," he said reproachfully.

"That is impossible, as I never had the pleasure of seeing you before," drawing up her neck with something like disdain.

"You shall not forget me again," in a low voice ; "I would rather be hated than forgotten."

It was fitting that Ralph Armitage should be introduced to Mrs. Sartoris at Cyril Landon's wedding; for the latter, though wishing to be her best friend, was destined once again to play the part of her evil genius ; and Mr. Armitage seemed ready to start on the same line.

CHAPTER V.

A STEP ON THE GRAVEL.

"GOING home, Mrs. Sartoris, so soon ? Don't you think it is cruel to desert us !" and Ralph Armitage bent his head, and looked down into her eyes in a way that he considered irresistible.

She was standing under the rose-covered porch after the last old shoe had been thrown, and the last handful of rice flung, after the last kind glance had been exchanged, the last affectionate words spoken.

Mabel's marriage had made another blank in her dull life, and she was feeling the void intensely, as a wave of bitterness swept over her heart.

How long was this to last ! Not for ever ! Would all her youth be gone in this dull waiting for a husband who never came ? What right had he to deprive her of everything that could gladden a girl's life whilst he went his own way, and indulged every whim and fancy ! Suddenly her heart rose in wild rebellion. Longings after something in the way of gaiety which she thought she had stifled rose up within her. Why should she always be lonely and dull ! Why should hers be the only empty house in the neighbourhood, whilst every other house was full and overflowing with summer guests ?

"Mrs. Sartoris, if you must go, let me escort you !" said Mr. Armitage persuasively. "I want to see your home—for I'm sure it must be charming."

"No, Mr. Armitage ; your place is here. Isn't it your duty to flirt with all the bridesmaids !"

"Heaven forbid !" holding up his hands with a gesture of horror. "There is not one amongst them who could keep me if I had the chance of coming to the Priory."

"The Priory gates are always closed," and she turned away to say good-bye to her hostess.

"Then it is time they were opened," said Lady Jane, eagerly pouncing again upon her, and intercepting her retreat. "It is deadly lively

here. What do you say to giving a hop over to the Priory ? 'Small and early,' you know ; over just before the last train. Just to relieve Mrs. Ingham, who must be dying to get rid of us."

"My dear Lady Jane, I never heard of such an idea. I never even have a soul to dine with me—except some of my own family."

"And you needn't have a soul now, or a body either. Mrs. Ingham insists upon all stopping for an early dinner at half-past six ; and after that, instead of driving to the station we go a little further up the road, and come to you. You are sure to have some room where there is a polished floor and no carpet. As to the music I can play, and so can Mrs. Davidson ; as to the food we shan't want any, only a cup of tea. Now don't be disagreeable and say 'No' ! I've cleared away all difficulties, and a refusal hasn't a leg to stand on. Do let us come ! It is such ages since I've seen you ; and I heard something that perhaps you ought to know," lowering her voice.

Violet's heart gave a great jump. News of her husband ! She wondered, and was ready to assent to anything, if only she could hear something of Jack Sartoris.

"If you are not afraid of being wholly bored and completely starved you can come. But I haven't the smallest inducement to offer, and the responsibility must rest on your own head."

And then she hastened over her adieux, and drove home in the hired brougham, which was the only carriage she had at her service.

Mrs. Milton, the housekeeper, stared till her eyes nearly dropped out of her head when her mistress said that she expected friends that evening. The drawing-room must be prepared for dancing, and a cold collation laid in the dining-room.

"But, ma'am, there's nothing in the house," gasped the housekeeper, doubting, as she told the housemaid afterwards, whether she stood on her head or her heels ; "and there's no time to make jellies and such things."

"There is plenty of fruit, and you must send to Canterbury for anything we want."

"But that will be such an expense," said Mrs. Milton, with a groan ; "and you've always told me, ma'am, begging your pardon, that there was no money to keep up the hot-houses or anything."

"I know, but after scrimping and saving for six years we must be able to afford something," impatiently. And then a change came over her beautiful face, and she put up her hands to her forehead with a groan. "I've been so quiet—I—I—shall go mad if this goes on. Oh, Milton ! there's a dear old thing, help me, and don't make it too hard !"

"I'll help you," softening at once at the appeal to her compassion, as a pleasant smile stole over her plump, weather-beaten face. "Harris will be delighted at an opportunity of showing off her skill. She always has said there was no encouragement here for anyone who knew how to cook, for ladies never did care so much about eating as gentlemen. Four o'clock now ! There isn't over much time. What if I went over myself in the little cart, with George to drive !"

"That would do splendidly ! I leave all the details to you. Have what is necessary, for Lady Jane Armitage is coming, and she is very critical."

And then Mrs. Sartoris turned away, and walked about the garden plundering the sweetest blossoms from the rose-trees, the most graceful trifle from the creepers, for her room should be made as pretty as possible, and no one should laugh at the arrangements.

There was a man in the village who was quite a superior musician ; his services should be secured, for Lady Jane should never say that "poor dear Violet Sartoris was such a pauper, that when she gave a party she worked her friends to death to provide the music."

As to how many guests to expect she was rather in the dark, as she had left all the final arrangements in Lady Jane's hands, and the latter was quite capable of inviting any amount of people.

(To be continued.)

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NOT ONLY IS DIAMOND-CUTTING NOT A SPECIALLY HIGHLY-PAID OCCUPATION, BUT IT IS ONE INVOLVING A MOST HUMILIATING SYSTEM OF ESPIONAGE TO THE WORKER. EACH MAN HAS TO STRICTLY ACCOUNT FOR THE STONES HE RECEIVES ON GOING TO WORK IN THE MORNING, AND THE COUNT HAS TO BE CAREFULLY TAKEN WHEN THE UNFINISHED WORK IS HANDED IN AT NIGHT TO BE LOCKED UP IN A SAFE, AGAINST THE RETURN OF THE WORKMEN THE NEXT DAY. THE POSSIBILITIES OF THEFT ARE GREAT, THOUGH A DISHONEST WORKMAN KNOWS THAT AN ATTEMPT TO DISPOSE OF AN UNFINISHED STONE WOULD BRING SUSPICION UPON HIM WHEREVER THE ATTEMPT WAS MADE.

AN ANCIENT LEGEND TELLS US THAT ONE DAY AS ORPHEUS, SON OF APOLLO AND THE NYMPH CALLIOPE, WAS WALKING BY THE SEA, TRILLING IN SOFT CADENCE A SONG TAUGHT HIM BY THE CELEBRATED TEACHER LINOS, HE WAS ATTRACTED BY THE SOUND OF SWEET MUSIC, WHICH SEEMED BUT THE ECHO OF HIS OWN GLORIOUS VOICE. HE WALKED ALONG, SINGING, AND THE SOUND APPROACHED, AS IF TO MEET HIM, TILL FINALLY IT SANG AT HIS VERY FEET. GLANCING DOWN, HE SAW THE SHELL OF A TURTLE, WHICH HAD BEEN CAST HIGH AND DRY UPON THE BEACH AND LEFT THERE BY THE RECEDING WAVES. THE LITTLE THING HAD DIED AND DRIED UP SO THAT ONLY THE SINWS, SHRIVELLED TO STRINGS, AND THE SHELL REMAINED. THE DRIED UP SINWS WERE TIGHTLY STRETCHED ACROSS THE HOLLOW SHELL, AND THE WIND, AS IT LUSTED, TOUCHED THE STRINGS, CAUSING THEM TO VIBRATE OVER THE SHELL SOUNDING BOARD AND GIVE FORTH THE SWEET, Sad TONES. ENCHANTED, HE BORE HIS TREASURE HOME AND FROM IT FASHIONED THE VIOL SHELL, WITH WHICH HE EVER AFTER ACCOMPANIED HIS VOICE, AND THE NYMPH, EARYDICE, ENCHANTED BY ITS MAGIC, BECAME HIS BRIDE.

AN INDIAN MOTHER SONG.

SLEEP, Little Love Flower, sleep ; the Day Chief goes to rest—
The watch-fire blazes brightly by his wigwam in the west.

Sleep, Little Love Flower, sleep.
The Night Chief cometh out the east, with spirit warriors in his train ;
Their plumes are black above the hills, their shadows fall across the plain ;
Their purple arrows vein the air, the shafts around us thickly fly,
They come, and lo, the council fires are lighted in the sky.

Sleep, Little Love Flower, sleep.
Sweet be thy sleep, and sound, on a mumber's happy hunting ground.

Sleep, Little Love Flower, sleep ; the Day Chief lies at rest—
The watch-fire burneth dimly by his wigwam in the west,

Sleep, Little Love Flower, sleep.
The marsh-bird pipes unto her mate, the answering note comes from afar ;
Weird voices 'mong the sachsen pines are murmuring tales of tribal war ;
The night-wind calleth from the north, the wood-folk wake with hungry cry,
The fire-flies hang upon the trees to light the Night Chief passing by.

Sleep, Little Love Flower, sleep.
Sweet be thy sleep, and sound, on slumber's happy hunting ground.

—Willis Irwin, in the November number of the WINDSOR MAGAZINE.

FACETIES.

A : "Your wife dresses plainly, doesn't she ?"
B : "Well, I've seen her considerably raffled."

"WERE you ever in a railway disaster ?"
"Yes. I once kissed the wrong girl in a tunnel."

TOWSON : "Is your daughter a finished musician ?" Yorksode : "Not yet, but the neighbours are making threats."

VISITOR : "Is this an old homestead, or a modern imitation of antiquity ?" Tenant : "Oh, it's new, brand-new. The roof leaks in forty places."

MIKE : "That's mighty foine whisky, Pat. How ould as it affter bein' ?" Pat (draining the bottle) : "Faith, an' Ol' dinno, but it's as cold as it ever will be, Ol'm thinkin'."

FRIEND : "How did you cure Reginald of his intemperate habits ?" Ribbonote : "I told him that the Prince of Wales was drinking nothing but water."

"I HAVE a scheme on foot, old chap, that I feel confident will make me independently rich." "Glad to hear it. By the way, what's the lady's name ?"

BERTHA : "Grandma, are your teeth good ?" Grandma : "No, darling ; I have none now, unfortunately." Bertha : "Then I'll give you my walnuts to mind till I come back."

HIS : "Oh, yes, I have heard him sing. I admire him very much." She : "Really, you don't mean it ?" He : "It isn't his singing I admire ; it's his nerve."

"Good gracious, child, you're dripping wet !" "Yes, mother, I fell into the pond." "With your new clothes on, too !" "I'm sorry, mumm, but I didn't have time to take them off."

"THE soil," said the political economist, "is what supports us." "Well, I don't know," said the sea captain, thoughtfully, "the ocean supports me about eleven months in the year."

LADY (to servant whom she is just about to engage) : "And do you understand how to take care of a bicycle and keep it clean ?" Servant : "No, ma'am ; but I can give you the address of the place where I get mine cleaned."

IN view of the hour at which he reached home perhaps her question was justified. "Why," she asked, sarcastically, "did you come home at all ?" "To sleep," he replied tersely.

HUSBAND : "What in creation is that baby crying for ?" Wife : "Nothing at all. He simply wants me to half kill myself looking after him. I'm going to name him after you."

"Yes, my son, it is very wicked to throw stones at cats." "But, father, it was a very bad cat." "How do you know ?" "Well, because it dodged, and the stone went through the drawing-room window."

"WELL, old man, how'd you sleep last night ? Follow my advice about counting up ?" "Yes ; counted up to 12,000." "And then you fell asleep, eh ?" "It was morning by that time, and I had to get up."

A COUNTRY paper has this personal item : "Those who know old Mr. Wilson of this place personally will regret to hear that he was assaulted in a brutal manner last week, but was not killed."

Tess : "So your friend May Giddie is going upon the stage. I suppose she expects to make a name for herself ?" Jess : "She did think she'd have to, but she found a lovely one in an old society novel."

INQUIRER : "Excuse me, sir, but have you a corker about you ?" Thomas : "Sir ? Do I look like a man who opens bottles ?" Inquirer : "Well, no ; you don't. You look more like a man who empties them."

"Did you see that story about the man who got a needle in his arm while trying to kiss a girl ?" he asked. "No," she replied. And then she added fervently : "But, thank goodness, I never learned to sew !"

Mrs. PODDS : "Is that a realistic novel you are reading ?" Mr. Potts : "Indeed it is. It contains a perfect description of the bacillus of yellow fever, and tells how to make apple dumplings."

WIFE : "Come, dear, we have no occasion to quarrel in this manner. Of course, I do some very foolish things at times—and so do you. You'll admit that, will you not ?" Husband : "Certainly. I'll admit that you do. That's what I've said all along." Wife : "Wretch !"

"HOW is the game of golf played ?" "It's played with a stick, a ball, a small boy, and a plaid suit." "It is, eh ? Well, what does the game consist of ?" "It consists in giving the ball a hard knock early in the afternoon, and looking for it all the rest of the day."

CASHIER : "I can't honour that cheque, madam. Your husband's account is overdrawn." Mrs. Check : "Huh ! Overdrawn, is it ? I suspected something was wrong when he signed this cheque without waiting for me to go into hysterics."

MOTHER (coming swiftly) : "Why, Willie ! Striking your little sister ?" Willie (doggedly) : "Auntie made me." Maiden Aunt : "Why, Willie ! I said if you did strike her I would never kiss you again." Willie (still doggedly) : "Well, I couldn't let no chance like that slip."

HARDUPPE : "Say, old fellow, lend me a hundred, will you ?" Riggs : "A hundred what ?" Harduppe : "A hundred pounds. I——" Riggs : "Oh, stop ; you're joking." Harduppe (earnestly) : "Joking ? I was never more serious in my life. I'm broke !" Riggs : "My dear man, you're not broke. You're cracked."

YOUNG LADY PASSENGER (on board a liner) : "What's the matter, captain ?" Captain : "The fact is, miss, we've broken our rudder." Young Lady : "But surely you needn't worry about that, captain. The rudder is under water, you know, and it isn't likely people will notice it."

A LONDONER who had been staying in a small country village for a few days was presented with his bill on the eve of his leaving, and noticed that the charge for eggs was exceptionally high. On his remarking to the landlady that eggs seemed scarce, she unblushingly replied, "No, sir, eggs bain't scarce, but visitors be !"

SOPHY : "Oh, Maria, I'm so glad to meet you. I haven't seen you for ever so long. Where are you lodging ?" Maria (tofily) : "I don't lodge. I am married, and have taken a flat." Sophy : "You don't say so ! What is his name ?"

"THIS," said the man who was showing the visitors about the office of the metropolitan daily, "is the copy-readers' room. It is the place where the matter sent in for publication is boiled down to the right dimensions." "Doesn't that make it warm ?" giggled one of the young women. "No," he replied ; "but the men who write the stuff get pretty hot over it sometimes."

"GEORGE," said Mrs. Ferguson, as they went in to dinner, "I wish you would tell Benny, in some way so it will not offend him, that he takes too much sugar in his coffee. It isn't good for him, and I know his mother wouldn't allow it." "Benny," said Mr. Ferguson, a few minutes later, turning to the young nephew who was visiting him, "you don't mix quite enough coffee with your sugar."

"I HATE to hear a man continually saying he wishes he were a boy again," said Mr. Sertus Barker, in his usual vindictive tone. "Don't you admire sentimentality ?" "That ain't sentimentality. It's moral cowardice. When a man wishes he were a boy again, it's because he wants to break loose and cut up. He knows that a boy can get off with a lecture and a switching for doing things that would send a man to gaol."

A BIRMINGHAM man, having bought some red flannel shirts which were guaranteed in every respect, came into the place of purchase after a fortnight, and complained that the article was not what it was said to be. "Why not ?" asked the clerk. "Have they faded or shrunk ?" "Faded ! Shrunk ! Young man, when I came down to breakfast with one of them on, my wife asked me : 'What are you wearing my pink coral necklace around your throat for ?'

AT an evening party lately the hostess had hustled out of the room to arrange some detail of the supper or something. During her absence a young man who had protested all the evening sang a sentimental ballad—to the intense agony of the company. The hostess returned after he had finished, and knew nothing of the singing. As he had to leave early he approached to make his farewell. "Good-night," said the hostess, with the usual excess of amiability. "Good-night ; I'm so sorry you can't sing." The young man crimsoned and fled.

A COUPLE of gentleman, neighbours, on the morning of St. Patrick's Day were giving their reasons for wearing the shamrock. "I am wearin' it," said one, a true son of Erin, "in honour of St. Patrick and the land that gave me birth." "Well, I'm not an Irishman," responded the other, "and I wear the shamrock merely to show that I appreciate the gallant deeds of the plucky Irishmen at the front." At that moment the last speaker's little son put in an appearance with a sprig of shamrock in his buttonhole. "Hello, Johnny !" remarked his father, "and why are you wearing the shamrock ?" "Because Mickey M——" (the son of the neighbour present) "said he'd break my head if I didn't !" was Johnny's unexpected reply.

SEVERAL years ago, in a well-known wholesale house in a big manufacturing town, an old bachelor bookkeeper, who had been many years with the firm, suddenly announced that he was to be married. The partners gave him a week's holiday, and his fellow clerks raised a little purse and presented it to pay the expenses of his wedding trip. A couple of days after the wedding one of the members of the firm went down to a seaside resort, and there lounging about the parade and apparently enjoying himself immensely, he saw his recently married old bookkeeper, but alone. "Where's your wife ?" asked the principal. "She's at home," was the reply. "But I thought you had money given you for a wedding trip ?" "So I had," was the reply, "but I didn't understand that it was intended to include her."

SOCIETY.

The German Emperor has thanked the Sultan for the gifts presented by Shahr Pacha to the Crown Prince and Princess Victoria Louise, at the same time expressing his unalterable friendship towards his Majesty.

The plume of the Prince of Wales worn on State occasions is worth £10. The feathers are pulled from the tall of the feriwhab, one of the rarest and most beautiful birds of India. Great expense and trouble are necessary to capture the bird, which is found only in the wildest jungles.

If the Queen remains in good health and is able to undertake the journey, Her Majesty will probably leave England for Bordighera early in March, for a stay of five or six weeks at the Hotel Angst, but of course with one of the Queen's age all prospective arrangements are of a provisional nature.

PRINCE FERNAND I. OF BULGARIA, who, it is reported, is betrothed to the Grand Duchess Hélène of Russia, is forty years of age. He is a Prince of Saxe-Coburg, and distantly related to our Royal Family through the Prince Consort. His first wife, whom he married in 1893, died two years ago. The Grand Duchess Hélène, who is to be his second wife, is only eighteen, and she and her cousin, the Grand Duchess Olga, sister of the Tsar, are at present the only marriageable princesses in the Russian Imperial Family.

The Prince of Wales is very conservative in the matter of eating and drinking. He dislikes long lists of comestibles, and, as to beverages, it is well known to his friends that only certain wines are acceptable to his palate. He is also very particular as to what cigars he smokes; but in this respect he is more catholic than was his brother, the late Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. The Duke Apparent likes to sit down at a fixed hour to his meals, and, very rightly, waits for nobody. Indeed, it is recorded of him, with what truth we know not, that on one occasion, when a relation of the Prince, a personage of high degree, arrived an hour late for luncheon, his Royal Highness observed, "I hope you will like the coffee—it is still quite hot."

The Guard Room of Windsor Castle is a symbolic record of England's triumphs all the world over. The standards presented annually by the Dukes of Marlborough and Wellington recall the victories of Blenheim and Waterloo, the placed topmost of the Victory, and Chantrey's bust of Nelson, the hero of Trafalgar. Not far off are two brass cannon, taken from the Sikhs in the Sikh War. Here are Russian guns from the Crimea, Chinese guns from the Summer Palace, Zulu and Sudanese arms and the great State umbrella captured with King Keffi Kalcalli at the first capture of Kumasi. If there were any danger "lest we forget" the great achievements of the past, a visit to this part of Windsor Castle should be quite enough to reinvigorate our memory.

The preparations for the marriage of Queen Wilhelmina and Duke "Hendrik" of Mecklenburg-Schwerin are being rapidly hurried on, as her Majesty has set her heart on being wed on the anniversary of her mother's wedding-day, or as near as possible to that date. Queen Emma's marriage with the late King Willem III. took place at Arolsen on January 7th, 1879; and if the forthcoming ceremony is to be celebrated so early in the New Year, it will leave little time for all the manifold arrangements which must be made. It is very unlikely that there will be any great pomp and grandeur about the accompanying festivities, and even the marriage itself may be a comparatively quiet affair; but, nevertheless, there will be much public rejoicing, and throughout Holland the question of how best to display the universal affection and loyalty to the beloved young Queen is being eagerly discussed. In the meantime, the Court and Government are fully employed with many highly important matters of State, including new laws which have to be made and passed providing for all the contingencies, as well as any difficulties which may arise in the future from the marriage of a reigning Queen with an alien Prince Consort.]

STATISTICS.

IN ENGLAND 600,000 lbs. of tea are consumed daily.

THE world's population uses 2,500,000 glass eyes a year.

14,500,000 acres of India are given up to cotton. About one-third of the crop is exported.

THE world has 128 astronomical observatories, of which Great Britain has fourteen.

Our first shipment of cotton from America was in 1791. It consisted of 91 tons only. The United States now sell us 540,000 tons a-year.

GEMS.

Be content with doing with calmness the little which depends upon yourself, and let all else be to you as it were not.

Many ideals, unsecured by deeds, are like unframed pictures. They do not long retain their freshness, and wholeness, and beauty.

NEVER be disengaged by trifles. If a spider breaks his thread twenty times, he will mend it as many. Perseverance and patience will accomplish wonders.

A GOOD conscience is to the soul what health is to the body. It preserves a constant ease and serenity within us, and more than counter-balances all the calamities and afflictions which can possibly befall us.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

A RELIABLE MINCEMEAT.—Ingredients: Two pounds of suet, two and a-half pounds of raisins, one and a-half pounds of currants, two pounds of apples, quarter of a pound of mixed peel, four cloves (powdered), rind and juice of three lemons, one and a half ounces of sweet almonds, quarter of a pint of brandy, quarter of a pint of port or home-made wine. Chop the suet and peel, stone and chop the raisins, grate the apples; clean and stalk the currants, and chop half of them; shell and chop the almonds. Mix all these together, and add the spices and grated rinds and strained juice of the lemons. Soak in the wine and brandy thoroughly, press the mixture in dry, clean jars; tie down carefully and tightly, and keep in a cool, dry place till needed.

SEA PIE.—For this dish scraps of different kinds of meat may be used. Sailors make it with portions of salt and fresh meat, and it may be made of bits of beef, mutton, rabbit, pork, or other meat at hand, if fresh and good. Take one pound of meat, one carrot, a bit of turnip, one onion, one teaspoonful of salt, a little pepper; also half-pound flour, quarter-pound of suet for the paste for the pie. Cut the meat into pieces about the size of a walnut, and put it in the bottom of a stewpan. Cut the carrot and turnip up very neatly, and sprinkle the pieces over the meat. Then chop the onion and put it in next. Add also the pepper and salt, and cover the whole with as much water as just covers all the meat and vegetables in the pan. Put on the lid and put it on the fire to boil. Meantime, chop the suet, and put it and the flour in a basin. Add a good pinch of salt and half a teaspoonful of baking-powder. Rub the suet in among the other things, and make it all up into a paste with cold water. When the dough is firm roll it round the size of the lid of the pan, put the round on the top of the meat, put on the lid again, and cook gently for at least one hour. If the dish is wanted larger, a potato or two may be put in under the paste, or any vegetable you have. When ready, take off the paste and cut it up like a sandwich cake. Put the meat and gravy on a dish, and the pieces of paste all round it. See that there is a little gravy; it should not be too dry.

MISCELLANEOUS.

An oyster is not fit to eat till four years old.

ENGLAND has forty-seven native warm-blooded animals.

There is a snowshod twenty-two miles in length on the Union Pacific Railway.

MORE than half the population of the earth has direct access to the Pacific.

THE velocity of a bullet from the Lee-Metford is very nearly half a mile in a second.

BEEs always place their honey in the coolest place in the hive; the young brood in the warmest.

In negro countries the number of men and women is about the same. In most white states women are in a majority.

WITH the single exception of Norway there is no land in Europe whose area is so taken up by forests as Germany, more than a quarter of its surface being devoted to them.

THE game of whist originated in England. It is believed to have developed from the older game of triumph, or trump, which was played as early as 1580.

GIRLS employed in the crape manufacture are under a curious contract not to engage in any house-work after their hours of labour. The reason is least their hands become coarse and unfitted for the delicate nature of their employment.

In Maryland a man has patented a shirt having a detachable front, which can be easily removed and a fresh one put in its place when soiled, the shirt having a series of buttons, to which tongues on the edges of the front are attached.

THINGS grow very fast in the short Greenland summer. As soon as the snow melts off in many places the ground is covered with a vine which bears a small berry something like a huckleberry. It is nearly tasteless, but juicy, and the natives are fond of it.

THE Emperor of Russia has given to the French Government a map of France, made in the Imperial factory of Catherineburg, which is a curious piece of jewellery in mosaic and precious stones. The map measures more than a square metre, and is framed in grey jasper. The sea is of pale-grey marble, and the departments are of jasper of different shades. The hundred cities marked are of precious stones mounted in gold. Paris is a diamond, Rennes a sapphire, and Havre and Marseilles are emeralds; Lyons is a tourmaline, Nantes a beryl. Nice a hyacinthe, Toulon a chrysoberyl, and Cherbourg is an alexandrite green by day and reddish-blue by night. Twenty-one towns are indicated by amethysts, thirty-five by tourmalines, and thirty-eight by rock-crystals. The names of the towns are inscribed in gold, and the rivers are traced with platinum, inlaid in the jasper. This map forms part of the Russian exhibit at the Exposition.

IT is a custom in Morocco that all the property of an official reverts at death to the crown. The logic which leads to such results is simple, for the government argues that all fortunes thus accumulated consist of money illegally retained by the authorities. A governor when appointed is probably possessed of no considerable fortune. When he dies, he may be a millionaire. Whence came his wealth? Squeezed most certainly from the tribes under his authority and therefore amassed only by the prerogatives of the position in which the sultan had placed him. It has never struck the Moorish government that these great fortunes might more honourably be returned to the people from whom they were stolen. The result is entire confiscation to the crown, including often such private property as the governor may have been possessor of before his appointment, and not seldom, too, of the property of his relatives. When the mighty fall in Morocco, the crash brings down with them their families, even uncles and cousins and all connected with them, and it is not seldom that some of great governors, who have been brought up in the luxury of slaves and horses and retinues of mounted men, have to go begging in the streets.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

CIVIL.—Apply at Somerset House, London.

A. K.—Attend the Court and explain the facts.

TEDDY.—Inquire of a good firm of music publishers.

A. M.—Anyone can draw a will if it is in legal order.

INQUIRER.—The value of ten German marks is 9s. 9d.

LAL.—Yes, why not ask the advice of a bank manager?

HETTY.—Clean piano keys with a soft rag dipped in alcohol.

A. C.—We do not insert advertisements in this column.

CIVIL.—You cannot enlist in England—must be on the spot.

S. F.—The Jewish year has 355 days, the Mahometan 354 days.

M. B.—Devonshire butter is richest in cheese-forming material.

L. B.—Impossible to say. No place agrees with all constitutions.

L. G.—We do not reply through post, give addresses, or forward letters.

H. S.—Probably the heat was too strong. Boil slowly on a moderate fire.

CURIOS.—The question of popularity is a matter of individual opinion.

INDIGNATE.—Morally he is liable, but we do not think you can enforce it legally.

DOUBTFUL.—He is bound to show it when asked to do so by one in authority.

REGULAR READER.—The word is French for "over-threw," or "breaking-up."

FREDDIE.—Tivoli is pronounced in three syllables, thus, Tiv-o-li, with the "o" short.

LIFTON.—Inquire at Messrs. W. H. Smith and Sons' bookstalls, at one of the railway stations.

K. D.—All infantry regiments are now known by territorial designation, not by numbers.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—Denmark was the first European country to abolish slavery in 1826.

A. M.—You can buy the syrup ready made for a couple of pence at any respectable chemists.

ROBIN.—The first English canal connected the Trent and the Witham. It was cut in 1184 by Henry I.

H. S.—The only thing we can suggest is to keep it well opened, hanging in a current of air, and safe from wet.

INCORRECT.—A wife is not liable for the debts of her late husband beyond the value of any property he may have left her.

A. HOUSEWIFE.—Matting will lie much more smoothly if sewed like a carpet than when tacked down, as is frequently done.

OLD READER.—Put on a well-fitting last, and rub carefully with finely powdered and sifted chalk and stale breadcrumbs.

E. V.—There has been one Dutch, one English, one Swiss, and one Portuguese pope. Two hundred and one have been Italians.

INFORMED.—You have a perfect right to decide such matters for yourself, and the rejected party can have no just ground of complaint.

D. C.—Do not think of going there without first consulting your medical man, and ascertaining from him that the venture is safe.

L. O.—Write Government Emigrants' Information Office, 51, Broadway, London, S.W., on subject, and reliable details will be obtained forthwith.

L. B. G.—It is sometimes polished with rottenstone, but we cannot say whether it will answer the piece you have, as some kind of surface may be laid over.

CHEMIST.—If the face is bathed in hot milk every night, you will not need to use any cold cream. This treatment is particularly good if you are afraid of superfluous hairs.

INFORMANT.—The mother must register the infant in her own name, except the father is present to authorize registration in his name; no one is present at the registration.

PUZZLED ONE.—The parents' consent must be obtained up to twenty-one years, but the marriage stands when made without it, no matter what the age of the parties might be.

WILLIE.—Bill posters ordinarily use a paste made by boiling barley in plenty of water until it becomes glutinous; a few drops of carbolic acid or creosote may be added.

VERY WOMAN.—Drop the acid, or paraffin oil will do equally well, into all the joints and crevices where the insects lurk; well washing bedsteads and walls with strong soap and soda water is best of all.

A. J.—It is no part of a policeman's duty to hold the horse of a driver who has gone into a shop to do business; if the driver sets out with the knowledge that he must leave the horse in the street at various places during the day, it is his duty to have some one with him who can look after the horse in his absence.

DISCOURTED EVA.—Often the shrinking effect of rain-drops seems to have ruined light silks, when all that is required is to iron the silk on the wrong side with a piece of muslin between the goods and the iron.

BETTY.—Feather beds should be shaken every day, and turned; let the bedroom window be wide open while you perform this operation; turn mattresses once every three weeks—not later than once a month.

L. B. G.—Sweet-oil applied with a soft duster is excellent for cleaning bronzes. Brush out all dust first, then rub with the oil, using as little as possible. Polish first with a soft duster and then with a chamois leather.

DISCOURAGED ONE.—Find out what you can best work at, and exercise your ingenuity in marking out a path for yourself, however humble. There is really a great scarcity of talent and skilled labour, but mediocrity is superabundant.

E. B.—Colonial law is similar to the law of England, which gives the whole of an intestate son's possessions to the father, even where there are brothers and sisters surviving; the mother takes no share during the father's lifetime.

DOUBTFUL MUSON.—If, after a careful deliberation, you are still unable to decide between your two suitors, turn them both adrift, for it is likely that you are influenced by temporary admiration rather than earnest and unquenchable love.

OLOA.—To revive chiffon have some very hot irons. Quill a wet cloth over the iron, and hold the chiffon over the steam until it is free from wrinkles. Renew the wet cloth and hot iron as soon as the steam flows freely. Spread the chiffon where it will dry quickly.

VIOLA.—Do not be discouraged. The very fact that you are disposed to undervalue your own attractions is an evidence of diffidence and modesty, and these qualities often command when assurance and conceit would repel.

GENTLE.—Rub towards the spot to concentrate the heat there, leaving the edge of the circle thin for quick absorption. The cleansing fluid, whatever it is, should not be left to dry itself, but be rubbed dry with a succession of two or three cloths.

A SONG OF TRUE WORKERS.

The world is sweet, the world is fair,

To earnest workers all;

Its mornings dawn in beauty rare,

Its evenings transmilk fall.

Or high or low in life degree,

The task our souls must share;

If but its nobler aim we see,

The world is sweet and fair.

The world is fresh, the world is new,

To those that work therein;

It seems but to the idle few

All stale and old with sin.

The blessed ones of labour's clan,

Working with purpose true,

They find the world, in God's good plan,

Forever fresh and new.

PUZZLED SYD.—"The tune the cow died of" originated in an old Scotch ballad, wherein a poor piper tried to make his cow forget the pangs of hunger by playing his pipes to her. The music may have for a time defered her demise, but she died while her owner continued the melody.

PESTRELL.—To banish ants, grease a plate with lard and set it where the insects abound; they prefer lard to sugar. Put a few sticks around the plate for them to climb up on. Occasionally turn the plate bottom up over the fire, and the ants will fall in with the melted lard. Powdered borax sprinkled around the infested places will exterminate them.

LAURA.—It is quite easy if you set about it in the right way. First wash it in hot soapy water, scrubbing any parts you cannot get at with your cloth with a soaped brush; rinse thoroughly in clean cold water, and dry with a soft cloth at once, rubbing till it shines like crystal. Glass never looks really nice if it is allowed to drain long before wiping.

L. R.—The stains, if treated at once before drying, may be removed by rinsing the spot in cold water, to which should first be added a few drops of aqua ammonia. If allowed to dry, rinse with cold water, and then apply to the spots a little diluted chlorine water or a weak solution of chloride of lime, and again wash with plenty of clean cold water.

JOANNA.—First wash it well with warm water and soap—no soda. Wipe dry, and then well rub with a slightly damp cloth dipped in dry whiting or prepared chalk. Polish with a dry, clean chamois leather. Furniture of this kind when it gets shabby should be given a thin coating of new enamel. It must be washed first, and then painted evenly with the prepared enamel which is sold for the purpose.

N. A.—Take the saucer of a breakfast cup, rub it over with butter, and set it over a saucer of boiling water. Beat up an egg lightly with a tablespoonful of milk, and a pinch of pepper and salt; also a tiny bit of very finely chopped parsley, if allowed. Strain this into the saucer, cover, and leave for ten minutes to cook. Of course, when catering for sick or delicate persons, it is essential that the eggs should be very fresh—new laid, if possible.

P. G.—Peers cannot sit or vote in Commons, but their sons, though bearing titles, are not peers, and can therefore offer themselves to the electors; Lord Salisbury, while his father lived, sat as Lord Great-britain (a courtesy) as member for Stamford for some fifteen years; when his father died in 1886 he had to go to the other House.

CAREFUL FOLLY.—To put on new gloves, first wash your hands; dry them thoroughly, and powder. Dust this off, and then slowly work the gloves on, fingers first, and then thumbs; but be careful to notice that every finger is straight. Fingers once worked are crooked never sit really well, and in consequence the look of the glove is spoilt. The second button should always be fastened before the first.

DOUBTFUL BRIAN.—If he has not strength of will sufficient to enable him to shun intrigues before marriage, he is utterly unfit for married life. If he loves drink better than he loves you, and indulges in it to such excess that he frequently becomes crazed from its effects, it would be rash for you to risk your lifelong happiness with such a man, bidden by the faint hope that you might reform him after he has become your husband.

FANNY.—Squeeze the pulp from the skins of six quarts of grapes and simmer slowly until the seeds are loosened, and strain through a colander, retaining all but the seeds. Make a spiced vinegar of six pounds of sugar, one quart of vinegar, four tablespoonfuls of cinnamon, two teaspoonfuls of cloves, one teaspoonful of salt and two saltspoonfuls of pepper. Add to it the grape skins and cook until it is quite thick. Seal it in bowls or jars.

LINA.—To make chocolate cake, combine a half-cup of butter with one cupful of sugar, add the beaten yolks of three eggs and one-half cup of milk. When well mixed, add two cups of flour, with which has been sifted a teaspoonful of cream of tartar and a half-teaspoonful of soda. Mix three tablespoonfuls of sugar and five tablespoonfuls of water with two squares of chocolate. Put this in the cake mixture, and add at the last the whites of the three eggs, well beaten.

ANXIETY TO KNOW.—Branded peaches are prepared in the following way. Peel the peaches after pouring boiling water over them. Make a syrup of half a pound of sugar, a half teaspoonful of water for each pound of peaches. Skim off the scum as it rises to the top; then put in the peaches and boil gently until they are tender. Take them from the syrup, and put them in jars which have been heated over steam. Take the syrup from the fire and add to it a half pint of brandy for every pound of peaches.

ETHEL.—Bits of newspaper moistened and thrown over the floor, or damp tea-leaves scattered about will collect the dust and leave the carpet bright and fresh. Salt, sometimes recommended, is not good, since particles left in the material grow damp and leave the surface sticky. The broom should be cleaned in a pail of suds, rinsed and shaken free from water, and the sweeping done lengthwise with the breadth, a little at a time. After a small pile is collected it should be taken up on the dustpan, and not dragged along the length of the room.

V. G. W.—The word tobacco is derived from "tabaco" the West Indian term for the pipe in which the natives of the Bahamas smoked the leaves of that plant. It is a matter of conjecture whether the use of tobacco was known in the East before Columbus discovered America. It is possible that the Chinese had long been accustomed to smoking it. The habit, however, did not spread to surrounding countries; whereas, on the introduction of tobacco into Europe from America its use rapidly extended and soon became very prevalent in Oriental countries. The custom was quite common among the Indians of America as early as 1492. The natives of the West Indies at that time, besides smoking it in wooden pipes, made tobacco into cylindrical rolls wrapped in maize leaf.

HOM.—If a lamp is to burn well, it must have a clean burner, clean wicks and a clean chimney. Dirty burners and wicks, besides spoiling the light, give off disagreeable odour. The daily care needed consists of filling it with oil within an inch of the top (not nearer, because the oil expands when the lamp is lighted), trimming the wick, wiping the burner and the outside of the lamp, and cleaning the shade and chimney. All this should be done by daylight. Many people never cut lamp wicks, but only rub off the charred portion; but they really need to be cut once a week, or they are sure to be uneven. Cut perfectly straight, and in the case of duplex burners round the corners very slightly afterwards. Now turn the wicks well down, and with a piece of soft paper wipe the top of the burner clean both inside and outside.

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